South Haven Tribune

$3

May 3, 2026

Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

Paula Kana'an, second from left, leads a discussion at the Parent Cafe on Friday in South Haven. Parent Cafes are offered once a month at the South Haven Memorial Library from 11 a.m. to noon.

Support in numbers

Parent Cafes connect caregivers in South Haven

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — In a relaxed, judgment-free setting, Parent Cafés are giving caregivers a place to connect, share struggles and build stronger support networks.

The Parent Cafés aim to help families by creating supportive, peer-led spaces where caregivers can share experiences, access resources and build community connections.

Mental Health Clinician Supervisor Paula Kana'an got involved with the Parent Cafes three years ago after working with the Van Buren Intermediate School District.

"I'm a social worker, by trade and by heart, and when I found out that it truly was about people supporting other people, no matter what group it is, I was just like, we need this in our schools, I need to be a part of this," Kana'an said. "Growing support in the community is a really big passion of mine. I truly believe that parents are the roots to their children and working for ISD, the children are our clients, that is who we're all coming to serve."

When she looked into the Parent Cafes, Kana'an decided to become trained for the program.

"If we're not also engaging and serving their caregivers, whether that's a grandparent, an auntie, or a biological parent, an adoptive parent – then we're not really supporting the students in the best way we can," Kana'an said. "I just saw that as another sort of branch to education in the

See **CAFES**, page A2

First-ever pet mayor fundraiser kicks off

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Al-Van Humane Society recently announced the first-ever Pet Mayor of South Haven community fundraiser.

According to a news release, the fundraiser will kick off May 5 with a nomination period running through May 11. Pets of all kinds are welcome to participate.

"This light-hearted, community-driven fundraiser will see local pets campaign for the title of Honorary Pet Mayor of South Haven," the release stated. "Residents will be able to celebrate the pets they adore while also helping raise money for animals in need at Al-Van Humane Society."

The election will include two rounds of voting, with supporters casting votes through donations. Each $1 donated equals one vote.

During the first round, held May 12 through May 18, candidates will compete within their respective parties: the Dog Party, Cat Party, and Critter Caucus. The top vote-getter from each party will advance to the general election.

The final round of voting will take place May 19 through May 25. The candidate with the most votes will be named Honorary Pet Mayor of South Haven and will receive an official swearing-in ceremony at City Hall, a prize package and bragging rights for the next year.

"This event is all about bringing the community together in a fun and engaging way while supporting animals in need," Al-Van Board of Directors President Cindy Moreen said in the release. "We're grateful to Mayor Annie Brown for her enthusiastic support of both this fundraiser and Al-Van Humane Society."

Community members interested in participating, voting, or learning more can go to al-van.org/petmayor.

GingerMan Raceway marks 30 years of motorsports

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — GingerMan Raceway recently celebrated the beginning of their 30th season.

According to a news release, the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated GingerMan Raceway's major milestone in the community with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

"More than just a place to race, GingerMan Raceway has built a reputation for offering an experience that blends energy and atmosphere," the release stated. "It's a place where the excitement of the track meets the ease of a Southwest Michigan evening, where visitors can spend the day immersed in the action and wind down as the sun sets, surrounded by a strong sense of community."

As the raceway enters its 30th season, they will feature a mix of programming that reflects both its deep-rooted traditions and its continued growth. Longstanding partnerships, returning favorites and new additions all contribute to a season that welcomes participants of all ages and

See **RACEWAY**, page A2

By Tribune staff

GingerMan Raceway recently celebrated 30 years of motorsports with a ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce.

Spring paving projects begin in South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Beach access off Erie Street will be closed to all traffic beginning May 4.

According to a news release, this construction is part of the 2026 spring paving projects.

"Miscellaneous paving will take place west of Maple Street and north of Aylworth Avenue, and Erie Street between South Beach and Monroe Boulevard will be closed to all traffic for construction including storm improvements and road reconstruction," the release stated.

Once Erie Street has been rebuilt to grade, Erie Street and miscellaneous areas west of Maple Street and north of Aylworth Avenue will be paved.

The entire project is set to be completed by June 16.

For questions or concerns regarding construction, contact Bella Haberski at 269-637-0776 or via email at bhaberski@southhavenmi.gov.

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 127th Year

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A Little Free Library

Like a Spring flower, our Little Free Library is back.

I'm grateful to the man who stopped by earlier this month, as it was being reinstalled, saying he had missed it over the winter. I'm grateful to the woman who walked up and hugged it just after it reappeared, all repaired and newly painted. I'm grateful to whoever left a bag of books two days after the quiet reopening.

In January, I wrote to the Tribune, explaining that on New Year's Eve the Little Free Library joyously shared for a decade with South Haven and visitors was vandalized. It was so damaged, I wrote, that I removed it so it wouldn't collapse on a child reaching for a book. We live near the big children's park in town.

For a decade without interruption – including winters, including a pandemic – we circulated hundreds of donated books. One 6-year-old girl was so charmed when she visited one summer that, for Christmas, she asked her parents for a little library at their home in Lansing. The next summer, the same girl returned to our book box. She deposited one of the books with us that had been donated to hers in Lansing. There are other precious stories.

I am an author. I love books. I am overjoyed when children read. I first installed the little library back in 2015 as a gift to the community. After it was damaged last January, I promised to try to salvage and reinstall it. I'm grateful to all who have shown interest and support. Please come take a book, leave a book, or both.

Michael McCarthy
South Haven

OBITUARIES

Casey Moschioni

Aug. 6, 1991 – April 17, 2026

Casey Alexander Moschioni passed away on Friday, April 17, 2026 at the age of 34. Casey was born on Aug. 6, 1991 to Ronald Moschioni and Jo Ellen Smith in South Haven, Mich.

He was a member of Lakeshore High School Class of 2009. Casey then attended Elmhurst University for a year as well as Western Michigan University for one year before working at Turkey Point Nuclear Plant in Miami, Fla. and Nature's Way Landscaping.

Casey loved spending his time outdoors. He spent most of his free time out on the lake fishing or hunting. Casey also enjoyed cheering on the Chicago Cubs and gaming with his gamer friends.

Casey lived his life to the fullest every day and will be missed by his all his friends and family.

Casey is survived by his parents: Ronald (April) Moschioni and Jo Ellen Smith; brother, Eric Moschioni; grandmother, Beverly Smith; aunts and uncles, Dina and Tom Buckely, Chris and Deb Moschioni, Robert Moschioni, Shirley and Bruce Smith-Torp, and Mary Ann Frazier; several cousins and numerous friends.

A celebration of life gathering will be from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, May 17 at Starks & Menchinger Chapel, 2650 Niles Rd., St. Joseph, MI.

Please feel free to share a memory with the family online at www.starks-menchinger.com.

Robert Charles Covey, II

Nov. 20, 1950 – April 21, 2026

He was born in South Haven, Mich. to Robert and Ella May Covey. He graduated from L. C. Mohr High School and soon after joined the Army.

He moved to Florida in 1980 where he worked in construction until he retired. Then he moved to Englewood, Fla. to help his Mom until her death.

He then moved to Ludowicki, Ga. to be near his daughter Chris Daw, (Greg) and their children: Briana (Brian), Tyler, Kaylee (Dustin), Toby (Kylee). He also has 11 great-grandchildren.

He survived by sisters Betty Bongiorno (Thomas) and Rebecca Covey (Todd Block). Also many nieces and nephews who looked up to him.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his sisters Bonnie Poindexter (William) and Kathleen Poindexter (Max).

Date of celebration of life is not set yet.

No deal yet on Gordie Howe bridge opening

By BETH LEBLANC
The Detroit News (TNS)

LANSING — The U.S. ambassador to Canada said Tuesday that the Trump administration has yet to reach an agreement with the Canadian government regarding the opening of the Gordie Howe International Bridge, but insisted "this will get worked out."

Pete Hoekstra, Trump's ambassador to Canada and a former Michigan congressman, was in Lansing on Tuesday to give an update on negotiations over the six-lane, 1.5-mile Detroit River span to Republican House Speaker Matt Hall and Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Hoekstra said discussions with the Canadian government have been regular and positive, but have not yet resulted in a final agreement. He did not have an estimated opening date for the bridge, which had been scheduled to open to cross-border traffic this spring.

"At the end of the day, the president will have to sign off on it," Hoekstra said of an eventual agreement. "There's a lot of issues right now between the U.S. and Canada. The bridge is one more."

As of last week, officials with the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority said they still expected a spring opening. But they have not committed to a specific date.

The hold up, Hoekstra said, is the fact that many of the conditions under which the agreement was made haven't materialized. The project came in "massively overbudget" – about $6.4 billion Canadian dollars ($4.7 billion U.S. dollars) – and border traffic is down, Hoekstra said.

The state's 2012 agreement with Canada, entered into under Republican former Gov. Rick Snyder, required Canada to fully front the construction costs and then recoup them through tolls until its debt was paid off. At that point, Michigan would get half of the toll revenues.

But with a debt of roughly $6.4 billion, which likely has grown since last year, and what Hoekstra estimated to be an about 4.8 percent interest rate, there are questions about Canada's ability to ever recoup its costs and, by extension, Michigan's eventual ownership of it.

"I don't think that bridge is going to generate that," Hoekstra said. "We're not obligated for the money. But we also know we're at a position where the agreement said that, at some point in time, the bridge would be paid back and Michigan would have half the bridge and half the revenues. There's questions about whether that will ever happen."

In 2012, Michigan and Canadian officials estimated it would take 30 years of toll revenue to repay Canada's treasury, but the repayment period has increased by an unknown number of years due to inflationary costs and declining traffic at the Detroit-Windsor border. One former Canadian diplomat has estimated it could take as many as 70 years for Canada to recoup its costs.

The ongoing negotiations between the U.S. and Canada follow President Donald Trump's February threat to block the bridge's opening amid trade disputes and complaints about the United States' share of bridge ownership. The 2012 deal forged by Snyder established joint ownership of the new bridge between Canada and Michigan, not the U.S. government.

"I will not allow this bridge to open until the United States is fully compensated for everything we have given them, and also, importantly, Canada treats the United States with the Fairness and Respect that we deserve," Trump wrote. "We will start negotiations, IMMEDIATELY."

"With all that we have given them, we should own, perhaps, at least one half of this asset. The revenues generated because of the U.S. Market will be astronomical."

Trump's commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, reportedly met with Matthew Moroun, the billionaire trucking mogul whose family owns the Ambassador Bridge, before the social media post threatening the opening of the bridge.

In March, the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority announced toll rates at the Gordie Howe bridge that would be half of what commercial trucks are charged to cross the Morouns' Ambassador Bridge, setting the stage for a potential toll war at the Michigan-Ontario border.

RACEWAY

From page A1

experience levels.

"From first-time drivers getting their start to seasoned racers returning year after year, GingerMan remains an important entry point and gathering place within the motorsports world," the release stated.

This anniversary season also showcases improvements to the facility. Recent renovations include: upgrades to the Tire Rack Tower with new siding and added lighting, enhancements to La Dolce Vita with a newly built deck and continued updates to amenities and track features.

"As GingerMan Raceway celebrates three decades, it stands as a testament to vision, perseverance, and the community that has supported it along the way," the release stated.

CAFES

From page A1

work that I do and was just super excited to become trained."

The Great Start Collaborative started the Parent Cafes and partnered with organizations, including the Van Buren Intermediate School District and Bronson Healthcare.

"It was just a way of increasing collaboration with community members and expanding who we could bring the cafes to," Kana'an said. "Several of our mental health clinicians that are placed in different districts throughout the county, South Haven, Gobles, Lawton, are trained in the cafes which can also be used for students or teachers."

The cafes were also offered in partnership with the Van Buren Youth Initiative through the Van Buren ISD at the same time as their summer programs.

"Parents could drop off their kids and then engage in the café," Kana'an said. "Unfortunately, there wasn't a high turnout."

Kana'an said the cafes are very diverse and they always look to meet the people where they are when it comes to giving them support for their need.

"There are cafes that could be done for grandparents raising grandchildren, for LGBTQIA specific groups, it could be for teens, it could be for single moms, it could be for dads specifically, or moms, dads and moms together," Kana'an said.

The meetings focus on the people in attendance.

"It truly is a focus on the family and the person who's participating in the event," Kana'an said. "It's very non-judgmental ... it's not therapy, it's simply parents or community members supporting other community members, which I think is really powerful."

Kana'an said the meetings are group-led discussions and not therapy sessions.

"It really dissolves that imbalance, if you have a group therapy session or something, there's a person in there who's the expert, where that is wiped out in cafes," Kana'an said. "Everyone is an expert on their own life and just talks about themselves and is supported by other folks in the group, which is powerful."

Those who help lead the café, like Kana'an, are trained through the Be Strong Families Café program.

"There are resiliency factors that we follow, that the Be Strong Families has created and we follow those and really try to guide the discussions so it's helpful and not hurtful," Kana'an said. "Sharing experiences and holding one another's story in a respectful way, that's what it's all about."

During the meetings, parents are able to talk with other parents and community members about what is going on in their life, their parenting experiences and share resources and advice while their kids can play and do activities.

"With this partnership with the (South Haven) library, the gal who does all the youth programming comes in and she provides Play-Doh and coloring sheets and all that for the youth and stays in just to like support the children," Kana'an said. "We have found that kids want to be in eyesight with the parent and so they sometimes come and sit on mom's lap and sometimes they draw and color and they just kind of move about freely."

Kana'an said other cafes may have different setups or activities for kids during the meetings.

"We're all about sharing what's out there and available to people to make their lives better, more stable, more fruitful (and) healthier," Kana'an said.

She said the main goal for these cafes is to grow community for local families.

"Growing community for young families, people who maybe feel disenfranchised, finding a place where they feel connected and seen and heard," Kana'an said of the café's purpose.

She said it has been hard to spread the word and encourage people to come after the events of the pandemic, but they are finally starting to get traction and have more people attending the cafes.

"The Great Start Collaborative, they were already running Cafes and they were pretty robustly attended, and then COVID happened and the café stopped," Kana'an said. "Trying to regain traction after all the shutdowns has been a bit difficult."

Parent Cafes are offered once a month at the South Haven library from 11 a.m. to noon.

To learn more about the Parent Cafes go to www.bestrongfamilies.org/cafes, the South Haven Memorial Library website or on the Van Buren Great Start Parent Coalition Facebook page.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

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South Haven business hub launches growth series

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Regional Business Hub is now accepting applications for its 2026 Growth Series.

According to a news release, the comprehensive 26 week cohort program is designed to provide small business owners with intensive education, one-on-one mentorship, technical assistance and access to critical business resources.

The program will be from 4 to 6 p.m. on June 10 at Lake Michigan College South Haven.

"The Growth Series is designed to help the region's most promising small businesses stabilize and scale," the release stated. "It is tailored for owners who have moved beyond the startup phase and are ready to grow."

This can include businesses operating for over three years, generating around $100K in annual revenue and managing at least one employee.

"Through the Growth Series, clients gain the skills, confidence, and networks necessary to scale and sustain their ventures," Executive Director of the Hub Elizabeth Bernhard said in the release. "The results speak for themselves: while nearly half of new businesses fail nationally within five years, Hub clients have achieved a remarkable 92 percent retention rate, generating jobs, innovation and lasting impact across Southwest Michigan."

The 2026 Growth Series will utilize the visual strategic tool, GrowthWheel framework, that helps owners identify gaps across 20 focus areas. Participants will leave the first session with immediate 30, 60 and 90-day action plans.

Participants will engage in sessions covering topics including:

■ AI and Next-Gen Skills: Leveraging artificial intelligence for productivity and decision-making.

■ Advanced Financials: In-depth reviews to create P&Ls, Balance Sheets, and 3-year projections.

■ Internal Processes: Developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for consistency and operational efficiency.

■ Strategic Marketing: Utilizing free Google tools, SEO, and targeted digital tactics.

■ Leadership Development: Applying research-based frameworks like "The Leadership Challenge" to build high-performing teams.

■ Team Building and HR Systems: Implementing structured hiring and onboarding processes and foundational HR systems to build and sustain high-performing teams.

■ Sales and Customer Acquisition: Refining value propositions and implementing strategies to attract and convert ideal customers.

The program will feature a lineup of speakers and subject matter experts including Sandra Cochrane of the WMed Innovation Center, Jennifer Sistrunk of Visit South Haven, Brad Scoffin of Advanced Business Brokers, Rob Paliani of HSBC Bank Canada, Cheri Bales of Hannah/Gold Communications, Logan Herzog of RISE, Dan Cubr of Sandler/EAM Consulting Group, Steven Cummings of SPC Consulting, Afiya Latham of A321 Consulting and Michael Neiss of Michael T. Neiss & Associates.

The program is offered at no cost to participating business owners, due to the support from the City of South Haven, Lake Michigan College and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

"Thank you (to the South Haven Regional Business Hub) for making this happen," Growth Series graduate, Cider Maker and Owner of Carriage House Ciders Paula Camp said in the release. "I have been in business development meetings before from my corporate life. Several were at prestigious universities, but (the Growth Series) program has honestly been the best …this truly made a difference in my business and will continue to do so."

All application materials must be submitted electronically by 6 p.m. on May 13.

To learn more and apply, go to www.southhavenregionalbusinesshub.org/growth or contact Elizabeth Bernhard at elizabeth@southhavenregionalbusinesshub.org.

Photos provided

The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the Kal-Haven Outpost's 10th season.

Kal-Haven Outpost celebrates 10 years of growth with ribbon cutting

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Kal-Haven Outpost recently celebrated their 10th season.

According to a news release, the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony recognizing the Kal-Haven Outpost's decade of growth, innovation and contribution to South Haven's outdoor hospitality and recreation industry.

"Established in 2016 with the vision of offering a stay for every style, Kal-Haven Outpost began with six family cabins, 36 tent sites, 20 RV sites and two vacation homes," the release stated. "Since then, it has steadily expanded to meet increasing demand while staying true to its welcoming, outdoor-focused mission."

Today, the property features 33 tent sites, three glamping tents, a converted school bus stay, six family cabins, four couples' cabins, 20 full hookup RV sites, 29 additional partial RV sites currently in progress, two rental RVs and two vacation homes.

Located directly on the Kal-Haven Trail, guests can enjoy immediate trail access for biking and hiking, while still being just five miles from downtown South Haven and 3.5 miles from the trailhead.

"Recent improvements continue to reflect a strong commitment to both guests and the local community," the release stated. "The addition of a Michigan-based beer and wine license supports a focus on regional offerings, while the on-site store highlights small and locally made businesses, including Café Julia, Decadent Dogs and Radiant Landscapes Photography."

Expansion plans continue with 29 new RV sites expected to be completed in June. These back-in sites will include water and power hookups.

"Kal-Haven Outpost is also known for its pet-friendly environment, with all accommodations, including tent sites, welcoming guests traveling with pets," the release stated. "A half-acre dog park adds to the property's appeal as a destination designed for the whole family."

In addition to lodging, the Kal-Haven Outpost hosts a variety of community events that are open to the public.

This year's 10th season celebration includes:

■ A Father's Day anniversary event on June 20 featuring family activities including a Nerf fight, cookout and bounce house.

■ Christmas in July on July 25 with Santa, site decorating, a potluck and roast pig dinner.

■ A back-to-school potluck and supply drive on Aug. 15.

■ Halloween weekends on Oct. 17 and 24 featuring trunk-or-treating, scavenger hunts, barrel rides, food trucks and family-friendly movies.

To learn more about Kal-Haven Outpost or book your stay, go to www.kalhavenoutpost.com.

The Kal-Haven Outpost features a variety of stay options including 33 tent sites, a converted school bus stay, 10 cabins, 20 full hook-up RV sites and two vacation homes.

Meals on Wheels launches medically appropriate meals program

By TRIBUNE STAFF

Meals on Wheels of Southwest Michigan has launched its new medically appropriate home-delivered meals program, designed to support seniors living with chronic health conditions including diabetes, kidney disease, high blood pressure and heart disease.

According to a news release from Senior Nutrition Services Region IV Inc., this program was made possible through a For Good grant from the Berrien Community Foundation, with a special emphasis on expanding access to high-quality nutrition for seniors living in rural areas of Berrien County.

Medically appropriate meals are nutritionally balanced, home-delivered meals designed to support individuals managing diet-related health conditions. The meals are developed with input from a registered dietitian and follow established nutrition guidelines, the release stated.

When available, locally grown produce and proteins are incorporated to support both individual health outcomes and the regional agricultural economy. All meals are prepared locally by JA Food Services, a long-standing partner of Meals on Wheels of Southwest Michigan.

"Food is about so much more than just filling a plate. It plays a key role in health, independence and quality of life," said Linda Tinsley, executive director of Meals on Wheels of Southwest Michigan. "We are intentional about offering meals made with nourishing ingredients, because our homebound seniors deserve food that truly supports their health. These meals help people manage ongoing health needs while honoring dignity, personal choice and overall well-being."

If anyone needs these services, they can contact the Meals on Wheels office at 269-925-0137 for further information.

By introducing the program, Meals on Wheels of Southwest Michigan continues to evolve its services to meet the complex and growing needs of older adults – particularly those facing health challenges and geographic isolation. The program reinforces the organization's commitment to health-focused nutrition, local partnerships and equitable access to services for seniors across the region.

Meals on Wheels of Southwest Michigan serves older adults and vulnerable residents across Berrien and Van Buren counties by delivering nutritious meals and reducing social isolation. The organization currently provides more than 11,000 meals each month through home-delivered and congregate meal programs, supporting health, independence and dignity for those most at risk of nutrition insecurity.

SH performance series kicks off 2026 season

By TRIBUNE STAFF

Photo provided

Award-winning pianist Elliot Wuu will kick off the 2026 South Haven Performance Series on May 9.

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Performance Series will begin its 2026 series with a concert by award-winning pianist Elliot Wuu on May 9.

According to a news release, the concert will begin at 7 p.m. and be hosted by Peace Lutheran Church, 06321 Blue Star Memorial Highway.

"Our Performance Series has been privileged to be chosen by the Gilmore Festival as a site to feature their prestigious artists," South Haven Performance Series President Bob Linstrom said in the release. "Our goal as a Series is to bring exemplary live classical style music to the South Haven community and I can't think of a better way to launch the 2026 season."

Born in Fremont, Calif., Wuu attended the San Francisco Conservatory Pre-College in high school. He went on to earn both his Bachelor and Baster of Music degrees from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Robert McDonald as a recipient of the Kovner Fellowship. Elliot released his debut album with the Steinway and Sons label in the fall of 2025.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with the South Haven Performance Series to present Gilmore Young Artist Elliot Wuu as part of the 2026 Gilmore International Piano Festival," Gilmore Executive and Artistic Director Pierre van der Westhuizen said in the release. "Elliot represents the extraordinary artistry and promise that defines the future of classical piano, and this partnership allows us to share that brilliance with even more communities.

Named a 2018 Gilmore Young Artist, Wuu has garnered top prizes in international competitions, including the Hilton Head International Piano Competition and the Yamaha and Bösendorfer USASU International Piano Competition. Most recently, he is a laureate of the 2025 American Pianists Awards.

Wuu has performed in major venues across the US, France, Italy, Germany, the UK, Poland, Romania and China. His notable appearances include performances at Carnegie Hall, the United Nations Headquarters, WQXR's Greene Space in New York, and Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris.

Other notable concert performances include appearances at the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, Aspen Festival, Ravinia Festival and La Jolla SummerFest. Additionally, he has been featured on WQXR's Young Artists Showcase, Performance Today and NPR's From the Top.

"Opportunities like this deepen our mission to celebrate and support young artists while expanding the reach of the Festival," Van der Westhuizen said in the release. "We are deeply grateful to everyone involved in making this concert possible in South Haven."

Founded in 2010, the South Haven Performance Series is an all-volunteer community-based organization committed to providing a mixture of musical arts for area residents and visitors. Most concerts are held during the spring and summer months with an additional holiday concert presented in December.

Performances are provided by the support of the South Haven Community Foundation, corporate sponsors and individual donors.

Tickets cost $15 for the spring and summer concerts while the holiday concert is presented free of charge as a gift to the community. Students are always admitted free.

Tickets are sold on the evening of the concert.

VAN BUREN COUNTY
DEMOCRATIC PARTY
Let's Connect!
Monthly Meeting
Thursday, May 7th at 5:00 p.m.
Lake Michigan College
125 Veterans Blvd, South Haven
Food & Beverages Provided
Virtual meeting link available—visit VanBurenDems.org for more information!

South Haven Tribune CLASSIFIEDS

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Deadline: Until filled

0900 LEGALS

COVERT TOWNSHIP
VAN BUREN COUNTY,
MICHIGAN

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING

TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF COVERT TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN AND ALL OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE **that a Public Hearing/Regular Meeting will be held by the Covert Township Zoning Board of Appeals on May 28, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at the Covert Township Hall, 73943 Lake Street, within the Township.**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE **that the item(s) to be considered at this Public Hearing include, in brief, the following:**

1. An appeal by Mary Staunton (47950 Blue Star Highway) challenging the Zoning Administrator's administrative decision to issue a zoning permit for the proposed construction of a single-family dwelling on property commonly known as 47988 Blue Star Highway. [Parcel 80-07-200-027-53] The subject property is situated within the LD-1 Low Density Residential District. This appeal is being reviewed pursuant to Article 28 – Zoning Board of Appeals, Zoning Ordinance.

2. Such other and further matters as may properly come before the Zoning Board of Appeals for this meeting.

Public comment will be taken at the hearing or written comment may be provided to the Township Offices prior to the meeting. Additional information regarding this hearing is available at the Covert Township Hall at 73943 Lake Street in Covert, Michigan between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

By order of the Covert Township Zoning Board of Appeals.

COVERT TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING

TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF COVERT TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN, AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that, in accordance with the provisions of Public Act No. 33 of 2008 the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, as amended, the Covert Township Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on May 20, 2026 at 6:30 pm at the Covert Township Hall located at 73943 Lake St., P.O. Box 35, Covert, MI 49043-0035.

The Planning Commission will consider recommendation of adoption of the proposed Covert Township Master Plan/Coastal Management Plan. This public hearing marks the end of the 63-day review period which was authorized by the Covert Township Board.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the public is welcome and encouraged to attend. The proposed Master Plan/Coastal Management Plan is available to read online at: https://coverttwp.com/building-zoning/

Written comments concerning the above matter may be submitted to the chair of the Covert Township Planning Commission, or to the Covert Township Clerk, at any time prior to the public hearing/meeting, and may further be submitted to the Planning Commission at the public hearing/meeting.

Covert Township will provide necessary, reasonable auxiliary aids and services at the hearing to individuals with disabilities, upon five (5) days' notice to the Covert Township Clerk of the need for the same.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that following public comment and discussion, the Planning Commission may vote to recommend adoption of the Master Plan/Coastal Management Plan to the Covert Township Board. Following the Planning Commission's recommendation, the Covert Township Board must vote on whether to adopt the Master Plan/Coastal Management Plan in order for it to be finalized.

COVERT TOWNSHIP
Wende Pritchard, Clerk
73943 Lake Street
P.O. Box 35
Covert, MI 49043-0035
269.764.5139
clerk@coverttwp.com

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CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN
PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

On Wednesday, May 27, 2026, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for the City of South Haven will hear public comments related to the request(s) below. The public hearing(s) will be held at 7:00 PM at City Hall, 539 Phoenix St, South Haven, concerning the following:

1. 248 Oak Street – Nonuse/Dimensional Variance

Tyler Borden of Locey Swim and Spa has applied for a nonuse variance seeking relief from Zoning Ordinance Section 2112 regarding the requirement that a swimming pool shall be located in the side or rear yard only. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-885-021-10.

Supporting documentation is available for review at the Building Services office, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090 during normal business hours. Written comments may be submitted in lieu of or in addition to a personal appearance. Written comments must be received no later than 12 p.m. (noon) on Wednesday, May 27, 2026. Written comments should be addressed to the ZBA and must be submitted to the Zoning Administrator at kdissette@southhavenmi.gov or via postal mail addressed to the ZBA and sent to 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090.

Individuals requesting reasonable accommodation for impairments or disabilities should contact the Zoning Administrator no later than five days prior to the public hearing in person at City Hall, at 269-637-0760, or at kdissette@southhavenmi.gov.

Kelly Getman-Dissette
Zoning Administrator
(269) 637-0760
kdissette@southhavenmi.gov

COVERT TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES
CORRECTED* NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
FOR MSHDA'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)
FUNDING FOR THE COVERT TOWNSHIP HOME REHAB PROJECT

Covert Township conducted a public hearing on April 14, 2026 at 6:00PM at 73943 E. Lake Street, Covert, MI 49043 for the purpose of affording citizens an opportunity to examine and submit comments on the proposed application for a MSHDA CDBG grant.

Covert Township proposes to use $400,000 CDBG funds for repairs and improvements to homes located within the Township and occupied by low and moderate-income homeownersto address health,safety and energy efficiency needs. The project will benefit 100% low to moderate income persons. Zero persons are anticipated to be displaced as a result of the proposed activities. Covert Township last received CDBG funds to successfully construct a Community Center in the amount of $80,000 in 1991.*

Interested parties were invited to comment on the proposed project during the above listed public hearing or in advance of the hearing in writing. To submit written comments in advance of the meeting, contact Township Clerk at clerk@coverttwp.com or 269-764-8986 ext. 2 no later than 10 a.m. on April 10, 2026. Alternatively, comments may be submitted in writing to the Township Clerk at 73943 E. Lake Street, Covert, MI 49043.

This notice is posted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1976, as amended, (MCL 41.72a(2)(3)) and the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Date Posted 4/27/2026.
A copy of this notice is on file in the Clerk's Office, located at: 73943 Lake St, Covert, MI 49043

CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with Section 30-92 of the City of South Haven Code of Ordinances, all persons owning property in the city are responsible for cutting and removing grass and weeds from their property and parkway. Grass and weeds must not grow in excess of nine (9) inches in height. In addition to the property owner, the following individuals are responsible parties subject to duties imposed in Section 30-92:

1) A tenant or other person, upon expressly assuming responsibility in a written contract with the property owner;
2) The manager of a business on a property, meaning the person that exercises the most control over the day-to-day operations of the business.

If the property owner or other responsible party fails to abate long grass and debris within five days of the date on the Code Violation notice, the City shall cut weeds and/or long grass and remove debris. The property owner or responsible party shall be liable for the costs of any work performed pursuant to this section by City's designated contractor. These costs shall be equal to the cost of performing the work plus a fee of $150.00 to cover the costs incurred by the city in enforcing this ordinance.

In accordance with Section 30-94 (c), the city may bill the responsible party for the applicable fees. The bill shall inform its recipient of the right to request a hearing before the director of public works (or, if the director of public works was involved in issuing the notice of abatement, the city manager), within 15 days of the issuance of the bill, to show cause as to why the recipient should not be held financially responsible for the cost of the work. Failure to abate long grass and debris may also result in a civil infraction.

City of South Haven Code Enforcement, (269)637-0763

Photo provided / Gulotta Imagery

The South Haven Area Young Professionals recently celebrated Earth Day by cleaning up various parts of South Haven.

Young professionals clean up South Haven for Earth Day

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Young Professionals recently celebrated Earth Day by bringing together local volunteers for a day dedicated to caring for the place they call home.

According to a news release, a group of 21 volunteers participated in the young professionals' community-focused initiative, Young Professionals for a Greener South Haven, by cleaning up key community spaces including a section of the Kal-Haven Trail, SHOUT Park and the Black River Park Marina and Boat Launch.

"Working together, the group made a meaningful and visible impact, collecting an impressive 560 pounds of garbage and helping preserve the natural beauty of South Haven for residents and visitors alike," the release stated.

As the first initiative of its kind for the Young Professionals, the event reflects a growing commitment to giving back and creating opportunities for members to engage with the community in impactful ways.

"The South Haven Area Young Professionals extend their sincere appreciation to all who participated and contributed their time and energy," the release stated.

The event was sponsored by Republic Services who provided essential cleanup supplies for volunteers, assisted with the disposal of collected waste and brought team members out to volunteer alongside the group.

"This Earth Day effort is just the beginning, demonstrating the power of community when people come together with a shared purpose," the release stated.

For more information about the South Haven Area Young Professionals and future initiatives, go to www.southhavenmi.com.

Narcotics investigation leads to multiple arrests in Allegan

By TRIBUNE STAFF

ALLEGAN — Detectives with the Southwest Enforcement Team, in partnership with the Mid-Michigan Investigative Narcotics Team, recently conducted a narcotics trafficking investigation in Allegan and Kalamazoo counties.

According to a news release, deputies from the Allegan County Sheriff's Office conducted a traffic stop near US-131 and 116th Street in Martin Township where four individuals occupied the vehicle.

"During the stop, multiple suspects resisted arrest, while another suspect attempted to destroy evidence by tearing open packages containing suspected narcotics and dispersing the contents into the air and onto the roadway," the release stated.

Three deputies were exposed to potentially hazardous substances and were transported to a local hospital for evaluation.

One deputy was injured after being allegedly bitten by one of the individuals.

One individual was transported to the hospital for treatment of a possible drug overdose. All involved parties have since been treated and released.

Over 400 grams of crystal methamphetamine were recovered from the vehicle.

"This seizure led to the execution of a residential search warrant in the 900 block of Washington Street in Kalamazoo, where additional evidence of narcotics distribution was located," the release stated.

Four Kalamazoo residents were arrested and face multiple charges including: resisting and obstructing police causing injury, resisting and obstructing police by attempting to destroy evidence and possession of methamphetamine with intent to deliver

"I am very proud of the excellent work being accomplished by the detectives with the Southwest Enforcement Team," Allegan County Sheriff Frank Baker said in the release. "Our partnership helps to make our communities safer."

Assisting agencies included the Allegan County Sheriff's Office, Allegan County Sheriff's Office K9 Unit, Portage Department of Public Safety K9 Unit, Michigan State Police Wayland Post, and the Michigan State Police Fifth District Crime Prevention Squad.

Residents are encouraged to report suspected drug activity to MSP-PROTECT@michigan.gov or leave an anonymous tip at 269-982-8664.

"Each year in Southwest Michigan, more lives are lost to fatal drug overdoses than to car crashes and homicides combined," the release stated.

If a person is seeking help for substance use, contact the Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health at 1-800-781-0353.

The Southwest Enforcement Team is a multi-jurisdictional task force funded in part by the Michigan HIDTA program and the U.S. Department of Justice Byrne JAG grant.

The team is comprised of law enforcement officers from Allegan County Sheriff's Office, Berrien County Sheriff's Office, Benton Harbor DPS, Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, Covert Township Police, DEA, Kalamazoo Township Police, Michigan State Police, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi Tribal Police, Portage DPS, Saint Joseph County Sheriff's Office and South Haven Police.

The South Haven Tribune makes every effort to ensure accuracy in its stories. If you believe there is an error, please contact the editor of the page on which it occurred. If you are unsure who to contact, call 269-637-1104 to be directed to the appropriate editor.

SH theatre series unveils 2026 show lineup

By TRIUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Theatre Series announced its 2026 lineup, marking its ninth year of bringing live theater to residents and visitors.

According to a news release, each show features acclaimed performers highlighting historical or cultural people and events.

The season kicks off on June 20 with "Michigande-rish" written and performed by Julie Ganey.

"When Julie and her husband find a nice spot to get away and relax, what they find is Pure Michigan – from unruly chipmunks and menacing deer to errant chainsaws and fervent eco-advocates," the release stated. "But most unexpected is the couple's discovery of the difference between visiting and living in an area. Laugh with them as they realize what it takes to belong to a community."

Ganey is a 30-year veteran of the vibrant Chicago theatrical scene as an actor, writer and teaching artist at the Goodman Theatre and as an adjunct professor at the Theatre School of DePaul University.

The next performance takes place on July 18 with "Audrey Hepburn" written and performed by Leslie Goddard, Ph.D.

"It's 1989, and Audrey Hepburn is at her home in Switzerland being interviewed about her work as a UNICEF goodwill ambassador," the release stated. "Over cocktails, she delights her guests with stories about her childhood during World War II, her Hollywood roles in such remarkable films as Roman Holiday and Breakfast at Tiffany's and her lifelong efforts to find real love and overcome her own deep-seated fears."

Goddard is an award-winning historian, author, actress and lecturer who has been presenting on American and women's history topics for over 20 years.

"Rendezvous with Rachel Revere," written and performed by Judith Kalaora, will be presented on Aug. 15.

"It's May 1775, and Rachel Revere hasn't heard from her husband, Paul, since his legendary ride warning of the pending British invasion," the release stated. "As the British Army's siege of Boston intensifies, Rachel must develop an escape plan for herself, six stepchildren and a newborn."

Kalaora is the founder and artistic director of History At Play LLC, which features plays chronicling the lives of influential, often-forgotten figures from history.

"Celebrate America's 250th birthday with this production illustrating the bravery and determination Rachel needs to survive the American Revolution," the release stated.

To wrap up the season, "The Spirit of Harriet Tubman" written and performed by Leslie McCurdy will be presented on Sept. 26.

"Harriet Tubman was an American slave who rescued herself from slavery," the release stated. "She returned numerous times to lead other slaves to freedom in Canada, played a major role in the Underground Railroad and served as a spy for the Union Army.

McCurdy has been performing for many years in Southwestern Ontario and the Midwestern United States as an actor, dancer, choreographer and singer. As a teacher, she has been instrumental in creating programs that provide opportunities for children and youth.

"Learn about this incredible woman, her struggles and amazing accomplishments, as she shares her life stories from as early as age five," the release stated.

All productions are held at the South Haven Listiak High School auditorium.

Tickets cost $15 with free admission for students. Doors open at 7 p.m. with performances starting at 7:30 p.m.

"Don't miss this opportunity to experience engaging live theatre in South Haven," the release stated.

To learn more or purchase tickets, go to southhaventheatreseries.org.

Tickets can also be purchased at the Visit South Haven Visitor's Bureau at 546 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090, or at the door.

The Spotlight
A Weekly Guide To Services & Business Around Town.

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Sheriff calls the ICE agreement 'safest option'

Heit: Over 60 people have been picked up in Berrien

By LAUREN RICE
Paxton Media Group

Don Campbell / PMG staff

Berrien County Sheriff Chuck Heit joins Berrien County Commissioners Bob Harrison and Rayonte Bell during a town hall meeting held Wednesday night at Zion St. Joe UCC church to discuss local ICE issues.

ST. JOSEPH — More than 60 people have been picked up by Immigration and Customs Enforcement from holding in the Berrien County Jail since last year.

That's according to Berrien County Sheriff Chuck Heit at a town hall Wednesday evening where he said he wanted to hear from the community and explain the agreement he signed with ICE early last year.

A 287(g) agreement says the sheriff's department will hold individuals for up to 48 hours if, after they are arrested and their fingerprints run through the system, they are notified that ICE has a warrant out for that person.

In 2025, 46 people were picked up by ICE through this agreement in Berrien County. In 2026, that number is 15 as of the end of March.

Heit said the 287(g) agreement has several variations, but the one he signed is the "safest option."

"I appreciate the opportunity to listen tonight, but also, hopefully explain ... not only what it is, but what it isn't," he said. "There's other models that are much more invasive, going out into the community, that I intentionally did not sign, because that separation between the role of the federal government and the local government, the sheriff's department, is (important)."

The alternative of not having any agreement is having ICE notified via the same fingerprint system that a person with a warrant out was arrested and released back into the community. ICE agents could then go looking for them.

"I stand behind the fact that I think the safest place to deal with that is when they're already in custody," Heit said.

For example, if someone was pulled over for speeding, they would not be booked and fingerprinted for the civil infraction. But if they were arrested for drunk driving, collecting their fingerprints would alert ICE and the sheriff's department of any outstanding warrants.

Heit said he stands behind his decision to sign the agreement, but the general consensus of attendees at the town hall held Wednesday evening at Zion St. Joe United Church of Christ did not reflect the same opinion.

The event was organized by We The People Michigan, which also sponsored several members of the immigrant community to provide testimony. They remained anonymous for safety reasons.

One person who gave their testimony in Spanish, which was translated to English, said they have worked in the fields for 18 years, and a lot of their friends are scared to go to work, to go to restaurants, to be out in public.

They said it is bad for the agricultural community to be missing out on out-of-state workers who come in seasonally to help with the workload on farms.

"We need this agreement to be removed so we can live freely and work," they said. "Right now, a lot of the food is going bad. We're not going to be able to support the amount of work that is going to be needed this season to support our communities with food. We just want to work."

The other town hall panelists present were Berrien County Commissioners Bob Harrison and Rayonte Bell, and state Rep. Joey Andrews.

There were more than a dozen people who stood to ask the panelists about working with ICE – pointing out unsafe ICE practices in other parts of the country; the economic consequences of being seen as one of the few Michigan communities cooperating with ICE; and humanitarian concerns about what happens to people after they are picked up and taken to ICE facilities.

"I understand the community and what the fear is," Heit said. "That's not what this agreement is. If I didn't do the agreement, it wouldn't take care of some of the concerns that are here. That's more the concern with what goes on at the federal level."

A letter was circulated before and during the town hall meeting, expressing an interest in having the sheriff back out of the agreement.

"This agreement is a voluntary partnership to collaborate with ICE, which is causing division within the community and fostering racial hatred, insecurity and fear, not only among the Latino community, but all citizens," the letter read. "This agreement has begun to have a negative impact on the county's economy and will impact the entire state if we continue these agreements to collaborate with ICE."

Many of the people present signed it, and a We The People organizer presented the panel with a stack of letters that had been signed by community members prior to Wednesday evening.

Heit said he would take the signed letter under advisement, but did not agree to any change.

Bell is a We The People organizer in addition to serving as a county commissioner. He asked the other panelists if they are willing to hold other elected officials at the federal level accountable.

"What you've mentioned here as far as the processes and some of the things that are going on when it comes to ICE being in communities – it sounds like there's a problem with certain laws and policies that are being enacted and passed by our fellow government," he said.

Andrews thanked Heit for participating in the town hall, and said this is what democracy looks like. He made a larger observation about what is happening to the community.

"What we are seeing all over the place right now is that the federal government is undermining trust in our institutions all over the place," Andrews said. "The reason this conversation is happening is because there is now a fundamental breach in trust in our community, in our local law enforcement, because of federal actions causing us to question who it is we can trust anymore."

Dan Robinson, pastor at the Zion St. Joe UCC, was the moderator at the town hall.

"I think the evening went well," he said. "People got to say and ask questions they wanted to, and the sheriff got to say the things he wanted to share."

Robinson said the church wants to be a safe place for people who feel threatened, and are motivated as Christians to do so.

"My concern is the future: how do we make that safety a reality moving forward?" He said.

Contact: lrice@TheHP.com, 932-0360

Al-Van Humane Society

Adopt ♥ Volunteer ♥ Donate ♥ Advocate

73303 8th Ave. PO Box 421 South Haven, MI 49090
phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pet of the Week, Petra!

Petra is a 2-year-old Australian Shepherd mix with a gentle heart and undeniable "classy lady" vibes. This beautiful, dainty girl carries herself with confidence and loves nothing more than spending time with her people. She's a dream on leash, making walks together easy and enjoyable. If you're looking for a sweet, sophisticated best friend, Petra is ready to take her place by your side.

South Haven Pet Mayor Fundraiser

Al-Van Humane Society is excited to share that nominations for our Honorary Pet Mayor of South Haven open next Tuesday, May 5th. If you think your pet has what it takes to run the town, you can enter them with a $20 donation. As part of the nomination, you'll submit a photo and come up with a fun campaign slogan to help them stand out. Nominations will be open through May 11th, after which voting will begin, allowing the community to support their favorite candidates through donations.

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST

Non-clumping clay cat litter

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays through May 26, 2026.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge: Chicago Scoring at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

Bridge: Duplicate Scoring at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

First United Methodist Church: Free meals every Tuesday night. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Meal is served at 6 p.m.

South Haven Memorial Library: Bridge Card Game from 1 to 4 p.m. every Tuesday and Wednesday. Open to the public. Beginners are welcome.

Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for students grades 6 through 12 every Monday from 3 to 5 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: May 1 through 31 "Deep In the Branches" (by 2026 Bailey Fall Conference Keynote Speaker Danae Wolfe) StoryWalk

May

4 – Baseball: Boys junior varsity team against Fennville High School at 4 p.m.

4 – Softball: Girls junior varsity team against Gull Lake Schols at 4 p.m.

4 – Golf: Boys junior varsity at 4 p.m. at Hawkshead.

4 – Tennis: Girls varsity against Hackett Catholic Prep at 4:30 p.m.

5 – Scott Club: "Revolution, Reaction and Reform in History" presentation at 1 p.m. in person at Scott Club and on Zoom.

5 – Rotary Club: Morning meeting. Presentation will be by Alexandera Newman of Region IV AAA will present.

6 – Soccer: Girls junior varsity team against Fennville High School at 5 p.m.

6 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against Fennville High School at 5 p.m.

6 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against Fennville High School at 6:15 p.m.

6 – Soccer: Girls varsity team against Fennnville High School at 6:30 p.m.

7 – National Day of Prayer: At noon on the front lawn of South Haven City Hall

7 – Baseball: Boys varsity team against Niles Brandywine High School at 4 p.m.

7 – Softball: Girls varsity team against Niles Brandywine High School at 4 p.m.

8 – Michigan Flywheelers Museum: Farm History Day from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

8 – Soccer: Girls junior varsity team against Parchment High School at 5 p.m.

8 – Soccer: Girls varsity team against Paw Paw High School at 6:30 p.m.

9 – South Haven Performance Series: Gilmore Piano Festival artist Elliot Wuu at 7 p.m. at Peace Lutheran Church. Tickets cost $15.

9 – Baseball: Boys varsity team at 9 a.m.

9 – Softball: Girls varsity team at 9 a.m.

12 – South Haven Garden Club: Meeting beginning at 12:30 p.m. with guest speaker Sandy Haga. Activity featured will be wearable trash art.

12 – South Haven Indivisible: Carsie Blanton to kick of her US tour with a benefit concert for Todos Bienvenidos from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts.

13 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

14 – South Haven Speaker Series: Astronomer Annie Blackwell to present "How Bright Lights Endanger Starry Nights" as she describes the growing challenge of light pollution and efforts to reduce it.

15 – South Haven Memorial Library: Messy Play event for preschoolers from 11 a.m. to noon.

16 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Starting at 11 a.m. "Forest Relaxation" with Jodi Henley. Find Your Path LLC. Experience the benefits of forest bathing while taking time to relax, unwind, and find a few moments of peace. Join us for an hour or so of slow walking and gentle, guided meditative activities to learn about how the forest can help us heal and reduce stress. Registration will open soon.

17 – Scott Club: Spring Concert Series featuring Redwood at 3 p.m.

19 – Scott Club: Michigan's Lady Senator Eva McCall Hamilton at 1 p.m. in person at Scott Club and on Zoom.

20 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

23 – South Haven Memorial Library: Astronomy Club at 11 a.m.

26 – Rotary Club: Morning meeting. Presentation will be South Haven High School Principal Amy Cockburn.

27 – South Haven Memorial Library: Friends of the South Haven library meeting from 2 to 3 p.m.

28 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Starting at 6 p.m. "Taking Time to be Present" with Jodi Henley | Find Your Path LLC. Feeling overwhelmed with your responsibilities? Losing sense of who you are? Looking for ways to reground and recenter? Join us for an hour or so of slow walking and gentle, guided meditative activities to help you feel present and connected to the world and your place in it. Registration will open soon.

29 – South Haven Memorial Library: Parent Cafe from 11 a.m. to noon.

South Haven Performance Series

Gilmore Piano Festival Artist

Elliot Wuu

Praised for his power, speed and finesse, Young Steinway Artist Elliot Wuu will captivate our audience with his vibrant tone and emotional depth. Elliot has garnered top prizes in international competitions, most recently as a laureate of the 2025 American Pianists Awards.

Saturday, May 9
7:00 p.m.
Peace Lutheran Church
06321 Blue Star Highway, South Haven, MI 49090

The South Haven Performance Series thanks the South Haven Community Foundation and our many friends for supporting the 16th season.

No advance sales. Admission is $15 (cash only). Students admitted free.

www.southhavenperformanceseries.com *Follow us on Facebook*

Bradly Scott / Getty Images

A costumed knight on horseback passes a crowd of spectators during a jousting demonstration at a renaissance fair in Eastvale, California, on May 25, 2025. The audience, dressed in both modern and period attire, watches from shaded wooden bleachers as the rider performs in full armor under bright midday sun.

Rethinking ren fairs

As events become big businesses, can they retain their counterculture roots?

By KATRINA STACK
Ph.D. Candidate in Human Geography, University of Tennessee
and REAGAN YESSLER
Adjunct Professor of Human Geography, Pellissippi State Community College (The Conversation)

Within moments of entering the Newport Renaissance Faire, you are ushered to a group of fairies. They pass you a scroll and say, "You must seek out the Bone Man for the first hurdle in your quest." As you navigate the fair, you find many men dressed in bones, both vendors and fellow attendees. When you find the correct Bone Man – an actor wearing what appears to be a mask made of human skull along with a crown constructed from deer antlers – he stamps your scroll. He then sends you to your next target: the Drunk Viking.

Following the directions of actors in the fair, you meet a variety of performers from many historical eras and fantastic realms, and stumble upon both merchants and merrymakers in your journey. It's all part of the immersive experience that connects you with the other guests and staff, though many of the costumed staff members, speaking in faux Middle English, are also trying to sell you something.

Renaissance fairs were originally conceived as a creative refuge for artists sidelined by political repression during the Red Scare. Now, they sit at an uneasy crossroads between countercultural expression and commercial spectacle. Having grown into a nationwide industry with tiered tickets, branded merchandise and multimillion dollar valuations, the fairs can easily be seen as an offshoot of a corporate theme park.

As cultural geographers, we wanted to learn more about whether the spirit of the fairs has been changing. So for our recent study, we visited the Tennessee Renaissance Festival, Newport Renaissance Faire, Tennessee Medieval Faire and Tennessee Pirate Fest.

Once upon a time ... not so long ago

Although renaissance fairs and festivals recreate the atmosphere of centuries past, the first formally recognized fair took place in May 1963 in Irwindale, California. A public school English and history teacher named Phyllis Patterson was the brains behind the event, which she dubbed the Renaissance Pleasure Faire.

For Patterson, the fair was a chance to celebrate the era's countercultural values like free expression, experimentation with identity and creative play. It also served as a source of employment for those who had been pushed out of their careers in the film and entertainment industries after being blacklisted or graylisted as suspected communists.

Patterson herself had refused to sign a Cold War–era loyalty oath required to work in California public schools. At the Renaissance Pleasure Faire, actors, educators and set designers could continue their craft, whether that meant designing costumes, creating characters, performing or writing.

From creative refuge to thriving business

Since those first events in Southern California, renaissance fairs have spread across the U.S., with some constructing permanent structures even though they're only open seasonally, in the spring or fall. Built to resemble small villages, fair operators create towns-within-towns, fantasy lands where visitors can briefly step away from their routines and obligations.

Their popularity continues to grow, and what began partly as a creative refuge has grown into a thriving entertainment business.

The East Tennessee Renaissance Faire recently announced that it would be relocating after deciding that its original venue in Newport could no longer accommodate the swelling crowds: Within three years, the fair had grown from 600 to 6,000 attendees, spurring a move to a larger site in neighboring Sevierville. New fairs are sprouting up as well: The Chattanooga Renaissance Faire will host its inaugural season in spring 2026.

There are almost always entry fees – US$38 at the Tennessee Renaissance Festival and $53 at the Renaissance Pleasure Faire, for example – and many offer season passes.

Attendees often arrive in costume, but strict rules about adhering to a specific time period or setting rarely apply.

Some visitors dress as Tolkien-style elves, while others show up as Tudor nobles. Viking-clad participants walk alongside fairies and swashbuckling pirates. Some fairs have also developed their own themed weekends – with names like "Viking Victory," "Fantasy and Folklore," "Pirate Plunder" and "Celtic Celebration" – that weave history and fiction with few constraints. And those committed to their role will often address each other in playful faux-medieval speech, with greetings like "my lady" or "my lord."

Vendors, often dressed in costume themselves, sell everything from cloaks, swords and crowns to contemporary jewelry and shampoos. Booths sell era-adjacent fare like Scotch eggs, ciders, mead and turkey legs, while modern cocktails like "The Shipwreck" and "The Blueberry Faerie" can also be had, with visitors paying the equivalent of stadium and arena concession prices.

Renaissance fairs have even spread to countries like Germany and France, reconnecting with their roots. The expansion into new venues – along with the development of offshoots such as pirate- and steampunk-themed festivals – point to profit margins that would have been unthinkable in the early days of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire.

But as with many ventures, the prospect of cashing in comes with complications.

The 2024 HBO Max series "Ren Faire" introduced viewers to the eccentrics and costume-clad vendors involved in the nation's largest fair, the Texas Renaissance Festival in Todd Mission. The fight over its future involved lawsuits and, eventually, the court-ordered $60 million sale of the event's property and assets.

King Richard's Faire, which takes place in Carver, Massachusetts, and is the largest fair in New England, reportedly generates massive daily revenue while allegedly relying on widespread worker misclassification, leaving many performers earning below minimum wage without benefits. Even volunteer "villagers" work only for free admission, and both workers and attendees receive no compensation or refunds when the fair closes due to rain.

Seeking out a space of whimsy

Despite the creeping influence of profit motives, we concluded that renaissance fairs have always been – and continue to be – mostly about community.

Dressing as a fantastical version of yourself or your favorite character bonds you to others dressed up at the festival. Unlike popular Civil War or World War II reenactments where historical accuracy is paramount, renaissance fairs instead invite people to take part in shared, often mythologized ideas about history through performance, costume and play.

For example, each weekend, the Tennessee Renaissance Festival organizes jousts. Competitors and their horses meet at a permanent jousting pitch located at the back of the property. Each knight represents a noble house, and each section of the bleachers is assigned a knight to root for. Announcers explain the rules of each event, while also leading the crowds in chants and cheers. While the knights might fight under titles tied to historical lineages, they represent a jumble of eras and place. They also reject antiquated social norms by including women and ethnic groups who never would have been seen together on a jousting pitch.

Here, fidelity to the facts is an afterthought; it actually might ruin the fun.

Beyond the jousting pitch, you can find the queen dictating a game of human chess. A rotating cast of performers play music, tell jokes, juggle and blow fire. Elsewhere, you might stumble across pixies teaching children how to make fairy homes or relax in a mermaid's magical grotto.

There's also a comforting simplicity in the narratives of this make-believe world. Ladies are almost always gentle and beautiful, while the men are brave and noble. All the villains are easy to spot – they're always defeated.

In a real world characterized by political upheaval, information overload, invisible surveillance and shadowy villains, perhaps the fair, with its simple prism of good and evil, becomes a space of comfort – a curated cultural experiment that's also an improvised escape.

In other words, renaissance fairs wield a quiet power: They forge communities that deliberately blur fantasy, history and everyday life with a wink. Vendors, performers and attendees alike can be Tudors, Vikings, hobbits, elves or mermaids for a day. Few actually believe in elves, or imagine their mock-Elizabethan speech is anything more than cheerful, mangled guesswork.

And that's the point. There's joy in pretending – just as there's a universal pleasure in the weird, the whimsical and the absurd.

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It's OK to love all the bees (the honey bees, too)

From THE CONVERSATION

THE CONVERSATION

North America's bee populations are in trouble, but don't blame the honey bees. While some people argue that an overabundance of managed honey bees – those raised to help pollinate crops and produce honey – is causing native bees to disappear, the evidence doesn't support the claim.

What is true is that populations of many species of bees, including honey bees, are struggling.

Half of all honey bee colonies die every winter in the United States, on average. Commercial beekeepers experienced their highest losses on record – more than 60 percent of their colonies – in the winter of 2024-25. Overall, one-fifth of pollinators in North America are considered to be at risk for extinction due in large part to habitat loss, rising temperatures, extreme weather, diseases and pesticides.

We studybeesand othervitalpollinators, and we can tell you that there are good reasons to love all the bees. In fact, they're essential.

Why care about pollinators?

Bees help farmers grow the foods people love to eat, everything from apples to almonds.

Along with other pollinators – such as flies, butterflies and moths – bees help nearly 80 percent of flowering plants produce fruit and seeds, which in turn support birds and other wildlife.

About 75 percent of the world's agricultural crops, including vegetables, fruits and tree nuts, benefit from pollinators. Additionally, pollinators contribute to production of feed for livestock and fiber crops, such as cotton.

In the United States, pollination by insects contributes $34 billion to the economy.

Among the pollinators, honey bees are the most important for agriculture crops. Managed honey bees, which beekeepers can move from field to field, are particularly essential in intensively farmed areas that lack the natural habitat to support wild bees.

So, why are people concerned about honey bees?

Honey bees were introduced to North America by European settlers in the early 1600s.

Since honey bees are not a native species, the most common concern you might hear is that they will outcompete wild bees for pollen and nectar. This is typically portrayed as a numbers game: If resources are limited, the more bees present on the landscape, the less food there is to go around.

Honey bees live in large social colonies and are adept at capitalizing on high-quality patches of flowers, leading to the concern that this species in particular may have a rapid, outsized effect on native bees that share the same food.

Managed bees can also carry viruses and other pathogens that may infect native bee species. Because viruses are shared among colony members, viruses can persist in managed honey bee colonies and then be spread to other bees that forage on the same flowers.

Scientists and farmers also have a concern about economic sustainability if farms are too reliant on honey bees alone for crop pollination. Threats to honey bee health and high colony mortality in the United States could put crops at risk if other pollinators aren't in the vicinity to do the job.

Why don't studies find a honey bee impact on native bees?

Humans actually know little about bee interactions. The U.S. has more than 4,000 native bee species, but there is enough data to estimate population sizes and ranges for less than half of them. Meaningful data examining the effects of honey bees on other species are even more scarce.

In a recent analysis, we found that only 15 percent of 116 published studies on resource competition involving honey bees measure how competition from honey bees affects the survival, reproductive output and long-term population trends of native species.

The majority of published studies on honey bee and wild bee competition address different versions of a narrow question: Do honey bees and native bees visit the same plants?

Because honey bees are "super generalists" that thrive worldwide well beyond their native range, most scientists would predict that the answer to this question is a resounding "yes."

However, about half of the research suggests that honey bees don't change the way native bees go about their day at all. From the perspective of a wild bee, the honey bees simply don't exist in their world.

Different bee species can coexist with very little evidence of direct interaction. An analysis of bee communities measured across diverse agricultural, urban, grassland and forested environments found the abundance of honey bees and the abundance of native bees were positively associated about five times as often as they were negatively associated. In other words, rather than landscapes supporting one bee species at the expense of another, the same habitatssupport both.

Calls to restrict honey bees from certain locations also often miss a key reality: Native bee hot spots and urban and commercial beekeeping rarely overlap.

Beekeeping is anchored in agricultural lands. North America's rarest bees thrive in environments like the Sonoran Desert – habitats that are poorly suited for managed colonies.

If competition occurs, it is typically the product of agriculture practices that strip the land of flowering plants that bees need.

Research that has artificially introduced hives into natural areas like the high Sierra – places beekeepers don't typically go – has generated competition that left less pollen and nectar for the native bees. But frequently competition involves common native bees that are not under threat.

So, if honey bees aren't to blame, what is?

The top drivers of pollinator declines are considered to be land use – the spread of cities and agriculture, as well as the way land is managed – along with rising temperatures, extreme weather and pesticide use.

Agriculture and urbanization reduce the amount and diversity of flowering plants, and droughts can reduce plant flowering and the resources bees rely on. Pesticides can reduce bees' ability to lay eggs and care for their offspring, or they can kill bees outright.

The U.S. Geological Survey's Native Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab tracks bee populations in the U.S. mid-Atlantic region. Studies using its data have found that urbanization and weather changes have been the major drivers of changes in wild bee abundance and diversity in that region.

As temperatures rise, wild bee populations are expected to decline there. Warmer winters mean bees active in spring emerge earlier from their nests, and increased spring rain and temperature fluctuations can limit their ability to feed their offspring, meaning fewer bees.

The western bumble bee, Bombus occidentalis, was once widespread and abundant across western North America, but it has been in decline since the late 1990s. Long-term monitoring of its populations from 1998 to 2020 shows the primary reasons are land management changes, increasing temperature, drought and pesticide use.

What can you do to support pollinators?

The biggest threat to pollinators is the disappearing variety of flowering plants.

You can help reverse this by filling your garden with more flowering plants, trees and shrubs to give bees, butterflies and other pollinators a variety of food sources.

You can also advocate for bee-friendly behavior in your community, such as creating pollinator habitats in public and private spaces and reducing the use of harsh pesticides and herbicides. Planting more flowers in parks and along roadsides, and protecting wildlands where the rarest native bees live, can help keep these wonderful species thriving.

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Placebo effect can work as well as real medicine – but your body may need permission to use it

By PHIL STARKS
Associate Professor of Biology, Tufts University (The Conversation)

The first time the placebo effect really got under my skin was when I read that roughly one-third of people with irritable bowel syndrome improve on placebo treatments alone. Usually this statistic is presented as a fascinating quirk of medicine. My reaction was anger.

Humanity possesses an extremely effective treatment, with essentially zero side effects – and patients need someone else's permission to use it.

The placebo effect refers to the improvements in symptoms that patients experience after they're given an inert treatment like a sugar pill. Driven by expectation, context and social cues rather than pharmacology, the placebo effect is often dismissed as all in the mind. But decades of research have shown it is anything but imaginary.

Placebo treatments can trigger measurable changes in the brain, immune system and hormone function. In studies on pain, placebos cause the brain to release endorphins, the body's natural opioids. In Parkinson's disease, placebo injections increase dopamine activity in the brain. The placebo effect isn't magic. It's biology.

Having spent nearly a quarter-century teachingevolutionary medicine, I've come to see placebos not as curiosities of clinical trials but as windows into how human biology responds to social signals. And it's that relationship that is exactly what makes the placebo effect unsettling.

Medicine works, even when it isn't medicine

The placebo effect is so reliable that researchers must account for it in nearly every clinical trial.

When testing a new drug, scientists compare its effects to what patients experience on a placebo treatment like sugar pills, saline injections or sham surgery. If the drug doesn't outperform the placebo, it rarely reaches the public. Placebo responses are common and powerful enough to rival active treatments.

Even surgery isn't immune to the placebo effect. In several well-documented studies of knee procedures, patients who received sham operations – incisions without the full surgical repair – improved almost as much as those who received the real procedure.

Clearly something real is happening inside the body. But the strangest part of the placebo effect is not that it works. It's what makes it work.

The prescription of belief

Placebo treatments tend to be more effective when delivered by credible authorities. Pills work better when prescribed by doctors wearing white coats. Expensive pills outperform cheap ones. Injections produce stronger responses than tablets.

Some researchers have even removed the deception from placebo experiments entirely. In open-label placebo studies, patients are directly told they are receiving a placebo; and yet many still report significant improvement.

But look more closely at how these studies are run. Patients are not simply handed a sugar pill and sent home. They receive an explanation from a clinician, in a medical setting, within a structured ritual of care: a context that may be doing much of the biological work.

Even when the deception disappears, the social scaffolding remains. The permission to heal is still being granted by someone else.

The placebo effect extends beyond the patient

The placebo effect is often framed as something happening inside an individual. But it does not operate in isolation.

Consider what happens in veterinary medicine. Dogs and cats cannot believe a treatment they're given will work; they have no concept of receiving medication. Yet when owners and vets believe an animal is being treated, they consistently report improvements in pain and mobility that medical tests do not confirm.

In one study of dogs with osteoarthritis, owners reported improvement roughly 57 percent of the time for animals receiving only a placebo.

The animals themselves may not have improved. But the humans caring for them perceived they had. The healing signal, it turns out, travels through the humans in the room.

When healing makes things worse

There have been times when going to the doctor made you less likely to survive. In the 19th century, mainstream medicine was built on bloodletting, purging and doses of mercury and arsenic – treatments that killed as often as they cured.

Homeopathy emerged in the late 18th century precisely in this context. Its founder, Samuel Hahnemann, was a physician horrified by the harm the conventional medicine of his time was causing. His highly diluted versions of contemporary remedies did nothing pharmacologically. But they also did not kill people, which put them decisively ahead of the competition.

Homeopathic patients not only survived but also reported dramatic recoveries from chronic ailments and acute infections alike. During the cholera epidemics of the mid-1800s, patients at homeopathic hospitals had lower death rates than those receiving standard care. Why was that?

The standard cholera treatment of the era was aggressive and exhausting; for a disease that already caused massive fluid loss, doctors often prescribed further bloodletting, along with toxic purgatives such as calomel – a form of mercury – to "flush" the system. In contrast, homeopathic care involved extreme dilutions of substances in water or alcohol, effectively providing hydration and a calm, structured environment without the physiological assault.

Death rates were lower not because homeopathy worked but because the placebo effect – combined with not poisoning patients – was more effective than the medicine of the day.

Healing is not free

The body needs resources to heal from injury and disease. Activating systems such as immune responses, tissue repair and inflammation at the wrong time can be dangerous.

A full-scale immune response is metabolically expensive, with fever increasing metabolic rate by roughly 10 percent per degree Celsius rise in body temperature. Triggered at the wrong time, this can deplete critical energy reserves needed for immediate survival, such as escaping a predator. Furthermore, misplaced or overzealous inflammation causes collateral damage to healthy tissues, potentially leading to chronic dysfunction.

Some researchers have proposed that placebo responses reflect a kind of biological health governor: a system that regulates when the body invests heavily in recovery. Cues from trusted individuals may be exactly the signal the body waits for before committing resources to recovery. A caregiver's reassurance, a physician's authority and the rituals of medicine may tell the body that conditions are finally stable enough to devote energy to healing.

If that interpretation is correct, the placebo effect is not a trick of the mind. It is an ancient biological system responding to social information.

Body under stress

The placebo effect resembles another system people struggle with today: the stress response.

Stress evolved to keep you alive in the face of acute danger – predators, famine, immediate physical threat. These days, this useful piece of biological engineering might fire when someone hasn't replied to your email. The system that once saved people's lives now makes many miserable over things that would have been unimaginable to their ancestors.

You can talk back to the stress response, consciously reappraising the threat – in other words, reframing a looming deadline not as a catastrophe but as a manageable challenge – to help quiet it. But notice what you cannot do: You cannot simply decide to activate your placebo response. You cannot will yourself to release pain-relieving endorphins by believing hard enough in a sugar pill. For that, you still need the ritual, the white coat, the authority figure. You need someone else.

The stress response, misfiring as it is, remains yours. The placebo response has been outsourced: not because it wasn't always social, but because even now, people still can't seem to access it on their own.

The uncomfortable implication

The placebo effect is not a trick of the mind. It is a feature of human biology that people have largely surrendered to whoever performs authority most convincingly.

If belief can activate biological healing pathways, belief can also be manipulated. Charismatic figures, elaborate medical rituals and expensive treatments may produce real improvement in symptoms even when the underlying treatment is physiologically inert. That is how wellness culture works. It leverages the same social scaffolding of care to trigger the body's internal pharmacy, regardless of whether the treatment itself does anything.

The placebo effect is often celebrated as proof that the mind can heal the body. But I believe that may not be its most interesting lesson. It also reveals that human physiology evolved to take its cues from other people. Your brain, immune system and pain response are not isolated machines. They are deeply intertwined with social signals, expectations and trust.

In a world filled with doctors, advertisements, wellness influencers and elaborate medical rituals, that insight is both fascinating and profoundly maddening. People are walking around with one of the most powerful healing systems ever documented locked inside them, and they can reliably access it only when someone in a position of authority gives them permission.

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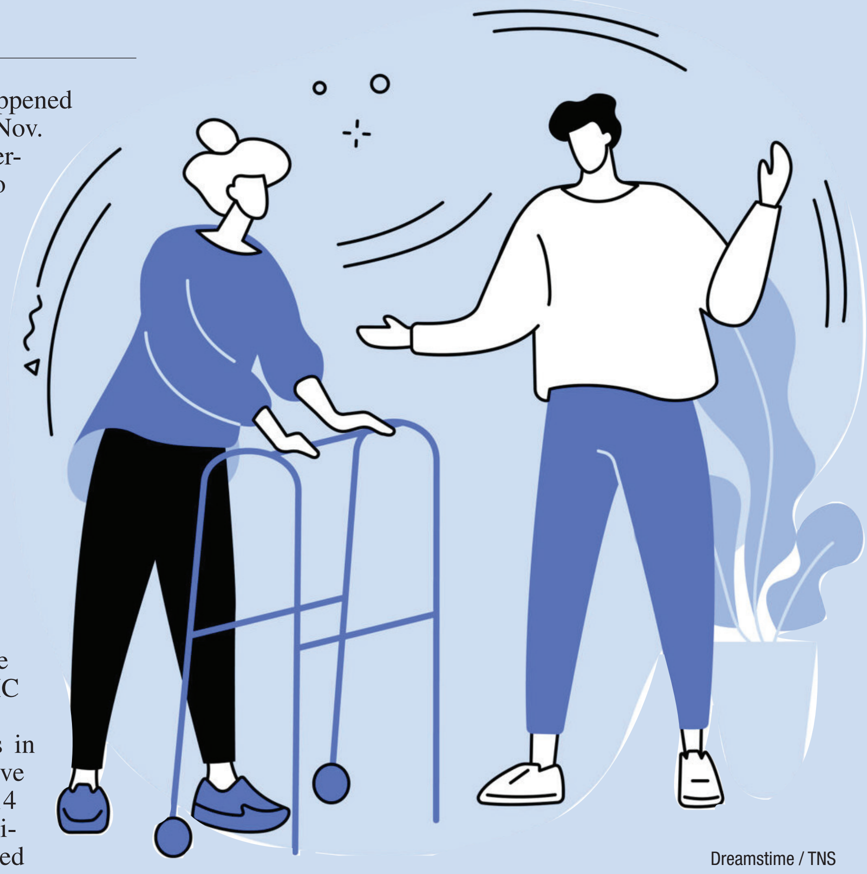
HEALTH

For many patients leaving the ICU, *the struggle has only just begun*

By PAULA SPAN
KFF Health News (TNS)



Dreamstime / TNS
Often called trigger site-induced headaches, pain from compressed nerves can last all day and be resistant to treatments like medication.

The accident happened in Pittsburgh on Nov. 16. Joseph Masterson, a lawyer who was just days from retiring at age 63, suffered cardiac arrest while driving, plowed into a guardrail, and lost consciousness.

Other drivers stopped, broke the car window, and pulled him to safety. A passing volunteer firefighter performed CPR until an ambulance arrived to take Masterson to UPMC Mercy hospital.

He spent 18 days in the medical intensive care unit there, 14 of them on a ventilator. He developed delirium, a common ICU condition, and needed antipsychotic drugs. Despite a feeding tube, he lost weight. "We honestly weren't confident that he would pull through," said Ron Dedes, his brother-in-law.

But he did. Masterson was discharged Feb. 1 and returned home with near-constant family support. Working diligently with several kinds of therapists, he has regained his ability to walk, despite lingering weakness, and to manage his personal care. His once-garbled speech has markedly improved. He can make himself a sandwich.

Now, "our biggest concern is his memory," Dedes said. Masterson, who so recently handled complex legal matters, forgets conversations and events that happened a few hours earlier, said Patti Dedes, his sister. He can't yet operate a microwave or place a phone call.

In an interview, he described himself, accurately, as "much, much better than I was" – but misstated his age. Screening tests after his discharge indicated cognitive impairment and depression.

Among critical-care doctors, prolonged symptoms like his are known as "post-intensive care syndrome," or PICS. The fallout can be physical or psychological, as well as cognitive, and can persist for months or years.

More than 5 million people annually are admitted to intensive care across about 5,000 American hospitals, and research shows that more than half experience such aftereffects. Older age increases the odds.

Patients and families are often startled by these continuing difficulties. "The belief is that they'll be discharged from the hospital and in two or three weeks, they'll be back to normal," said Brad Butcher, who was Masterson's doctor and wrote about PICS recently in the medical journal JAMA. "That doesn't comport with reality."

In fact, with greater ICU use and improved treatments – the Society of Critical Care Medicine estimates that 70 percent to 90 percent of adults now survive their stays – the population likely to encounter the syndrome is growing.

"Everyone is grateful that the patient has survived," said Lauren Ferrante, a pulmonary critical-care doctor and researcher at the Yale School of Medicine. "But that's just the start of a long road to recovery." In a study of patients 70 and older that she co-authored, within six months after discharge only about half had returned to their pre-ICU functional ability.

Intensive care patients face a long list of challenges. PICS symptoms range from the physical – weakness, pain, neuropathy (tingling in arms and legs), and malnutrition – to mental health concerns, primarily anxiety and depression. Cognitive difficulties like Masterson's are commonplace, including problems with memory, attention and concentration, and language.

"For many people, surviving a critical illness is a life-altering experience," Butcher said. Patients in intensive care after emergency or elective surgery also have high rates of new physical, mental, and cognitive problems a year later.

The same aggressive treatments that save lives contribute to the syndrome. Intensive care patients "have some sort of dramatic organ failure that requires immediate attention" and constant monitoring, explained Carla Sevin, a pulmonary critical-care doctor who directs the ICU Recovery Center at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

That could mean a breathing tube attached to a ventilator, which in turn often requires sedating drugs. Sedation "can precipitate delirium, and delirium is the key factor in cognitive symptoms," Butcher said.

It doesn't help that constant beeps and alarms from monitors and round-the-clock bright lighting disrupt sleep, and that restrictive family visiting hours deprive patients of reassuring faces and voices.

Gregory Matthews, a retired accountant in St. Petersburg, Florida, spent nearly a month in an ICU after a lung transplant in 2014. He still vividly remembers his hallucinations, including mice running across the wall and someone trying to frame him for drug running.

"One day, I thought a doctor was an assassin – I could see the rifle," said Matthews, now 80. "So I jumped out of bed," he said, and yanked out his IVs. The staff put his arms in restraints for days.

But immobilization exacts its own toll as patients quickly lose muscle mass and strength. "Our bodies were not meant to lie in bed all day," Ferrante said.

Psychologically, "PTSD is pretty common, similar to what's seen in combat veterans or sexual assault survivors," Sevin said, referring to post-traumatic stress disorder. Families can suffer anxiety and depression along with the patients.

Alarmed by such discoveries, doctors and administrators at about 35 U.S. hospitals have established post-ICU clinics, where teams of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, therapists (physical, occupational, cognitive, speech), and social workers screen for a host of conditions and help guide patients through them.

Vanderbilt's clinic saw its first patient in 2012. The Critical Illness Recovery Center at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, which Butcher founded in 2018, works with about 100 patients a year, including Masterson. Yale opened its clinic in 2022.

They rely on six practices recommended by the Society of Critical Care Medicine that are shown to significantly reduce post-ICU symptoms. The measures call for changes such as using lighter sedation, getting patients up and moving earlier, testing their breathing daily to wean them from ventilators sooner, and removing restrictions on family visiting.

Clinics often offer support groups for patients and families. There's evidence that keeping an ICU diary, in which patients and caregivers record their experiences, and engaging in exercise and physical rehabilitation improve mental health after discharge.

Also on the clinics' agenda: discussions of what other options patients might prefer if they face another critical illness, as many do. Would they agree to undergo intensive care and risk its aftereffects again? Or choose palliative care, which emphasizes comfort rather than cure? Some post-ICU patients remain permanently impaired.

Butcher, although he said that the use of the new practices needed to expand dramatically, sounded optimistic about the future of critical care. "We're going to find better diagnostic tools, better preventive strategies, and better therapies," he said.

For now, though, the ICU experience remains disorienting and sometimes traumatic. When Butcher asked 117 patients in his post-ICU clinic those next-time questions, many wanted to place limits on further medical interventions.

About a third would want to lower the level of aggressive care. Of those, about a quarter would want "do not resuscitate" and "do not intubate" orders, and almost 7 percent said they never wanted to return to an ICU.

Masterson is working hard to further his recovery. "I haven't been out and about much," he said. "I've been kind of homebound." He hopes to get strong enough to resume running – he used to log 3 to 4 miles several times a week.

The future for patients contending with post-ICU syndrome often depends on their physical, mental, and cognitive health before their admission. Masterson's previous fitness and cognitively demanding work bode well for his further progress, Butcher said.

His family remains alternatively hopeful and worried. "Down the road, what's it going to be like?" Dedes, his brother-in-law, wondered. "We just take it day by day."

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MAYO CLINIC MINUTE

Treating severe headaches caused by nerve compression

More than 5 million people annually are admitted to intensive care across about 5,000 American hospitals, and research shows that more than half experience such aftereffects. Older age increases the odds.
Visual Generation / Dreamstime / TNS

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

Some severe headaches aren't migraines. They may be caused by a nerve being pinched. When other treatments don't work, surgery may offer relief. Learn more from Dr. Antonio Forte, a Mayo Clinic microvascular plastic and reconstructive surgeon with deep experience in migraine surgery.

Often called trigger site-induced headaches, pain from compressed nerves can last all day and be resistant to treatments like medication.

"Headaches that originate from compression of the occipital nerve will usually have a pain that starts on the back of the neck and radiates to the side of the head," says Dr. Forte. "Patients who have headaches that originate from compression of the supraorbital and supratrochlear nerve, they will usually start with a pain site that is above their eye, and that pain will radiate to their forehead."

Evaluation and care

Nerves can be compressed by surrounding tissue or muscle. At Mayo Clinic, patients are evaluated by a multidisciplinary team that gathers the necessary data and imaging to develop a personalized care plan, which may include surgical nerve decompression.

Dr. Forte explains that occipital nerve decompression starts with a 5-centimeter incision made along the hairline.

"We are able to then identify your greater occipital nerve and then remove the adjacent muscle and fascia that may be compressing the nerve," he says. "When patients undergo surgery for decompression of the supraorbital or supratrochlear nerve, we then perform an incision that is similar to the incision that we do when we are performing a cosmetic eyelid surgery."

Surrounding tissue is removed to relieve pressure on the nerve. Dr. Forte says many patients feel relief within weeks of nerve decompression surgery.

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

Walking and biking to school: How to keep kids safe

By PHYLLIS AGRAN, MD, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

Many parents wonder when their child is ready to walk or bike to school. Children usually aren't ready to start walking to school without an adult until about fifth grade, or around age 10. Younger children are more impulsive and less cautious around traffic, and they often don't fully understand other potential dangers they could come across.

If your younger children still want to walk to school, consider walking with them. By walking with your children to and from school, you can help them learn the neighborhood, teach them about traffic signs, street signs and directions, and model correct behaviors when crossing streets. It's also a great opportunity for some time to chat with your kids.

Keep in mind when walking with your young child to hold their hand while crossing the street, observe all traffic signs, and be sure they look both ways before crossing. By modeling safe pedestrian behavior, you can show your child how to be as safe as possible.

You can also consider starting a walking school bus by inviting families in your neighborhood to walk children to school together as a group. Adults may take turns walking with the group, so make sure each child knows the adults in their walking group.

When it comes to older kids walking to school, each child is different. That's why it's important to consider their individual developmental and maturity level when deciding if it is safe for them to walk to school without an adult. Some children may not have the skills to focus on safe pedestrian behavior until they are 10 years or older.

For older students walking to school, encourage them to take a safe route with adult crossing guards, travel in pairs or groups, and to not use cellphones while crossing the street. Teach them to say "no" if offered a ride home by a stranger and to yell and run if their "no" is not respected. Bright-colored backpacks or jackets can also be helpful as research shows that the hours of 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. are the riskiest times of day for child pedestrians.

Bike riding is also a great way to get to and from school, when children are ready. Keep in mind that kids need to learn to be safe pedestrians before they can be safe bicyclists.

Once kids are ready to roll, some basic bicycle safety steps can help keep them safe. Practicing ahead of time before the first day of school can help kids feel more comfortable riding to and from school.

Making sure they know the rules of the road is another crucial step. Kids need to know how to ride on the right side of the road with the flow of traffic in bike lanes if available, to stop at all intersections and before entering the street, to respect the same traffic signals cars do, and to use their hands to indicate turns.

Make sure your child wears a bicycle helmet, no matter how short or long the ride. Wearing a helmet can cut the risk of head injuries by about 85 percent and facial injuries by about 65 percent among bike riders. The helmet should be approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and fit correctly.

Many of the same rules for walking to school apply to biking. Children should only ride a bike when there is plenty of daylight, they should wear white or bright-colored clothing to increase visibility, and not be distracted by phones while riding.

As electric bikes become more popular, it's important to understand that the same safety precautions apply whether the bike is traditional or electric. However, e-bikes do require different skills and extra training; many states, and even some communities, have regulations on who can or cannot ride e-bikes.

The first step is to find out whether there are laws or rules about how old a person must be to operate an e-bike. Check the vehicle code in your state and regulations in your community. Confirm whether the rules apply to all classes of e-bikes as some areas also have stricter laws for the faster (class 3) e-bikes.

Keep in mind: The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that children age 9 through 12 years should not operate any product that travels faster than 10 mph.

Walking and biking to school helps keep children and their communities happy and healthy. Parents and pediatricians can advocate for child pedestrian safety by supporting and encouraging community programs with resources offered through organizations such as Safe Routes to School. These include walkability checklists to score your community, for example, and national events such as Bike to School Day each spring and Walk to School Day in fall.

Phyllis Agran, MD, FAAP, serves on the executive committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Council on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention. She is a professor in the Department of Pediatrics at University of California, Irvine, School of Medicine.

simpson33 via Getty Images

HEPA air purifiers may boost brain power in adults over 40

By NICHOLAS PELLEGRINO
and DOUG BRUGGE
University of Connecticut
and MISHA ELIASZIW
Tufts University (The Conversation)

Using an in-home HEPA purifier for one month spurs a small but significant improvement in brain function in adults age 40 and older. That's the result of a new study we co-authored in the journal Scientific Reports.

HEPA purifiers – HEPA stands for high efficiency particulate air – remove particulate matter from the air. Exposure to particulate matter has been connected to respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses as well as neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Environmental health researchers increasingly recommend that people use HEPA air purifiers in their homes to lower their exposure to particulate matter, but few studies have examined whether using them boosts mental function.

We analyzed data from a study of 119 people ages 30 to 74 living in Somerville, Massachusetts. Somerville sits along Interstate 93 and Route 28, two major highways, resulting in relatively high levels of traffic-related air pollution. This makes it an especially good location for testing the health effects of air purifiers.

We randomly assigned participants to one of two groups. One used a HEPA air purifier for one month and then a sham air purifier – which looked and acted like the real thing but did not contain the air-cleaning filter – for one month, with a month-long break in between. The second group used the real and sham purifiers in reverse order.

After each month, participants took a test that measured different aspects of their mental capacity. The test probed people's visual memory and motor speed skills by measuring how quickly they could draw lines between sequential numbers, and it tested executive function and mental flexibility by asking them to draw lines between alternating sequential numbers and letters.

We found that participants 40 years and older – about 42 percent of our sample – on average completed the section testing for mental flexibility and executive function 12 percent faster after using the HEPA purifier than after using the sham purifier. That was true even when we accounted for factors like differences in the amount of time participants spent indoors, with either filter, as well as how stressful they found the test.

This improvement may seem small, but it is similar to the cognitive benefits that people experience from increasing their daily exercise. While you may not experience a sudden increase in clarity from a 12 percent boost, preventing cognitive decline is vital for long-term well-being. Even small decreases in cognitive functioning may be associated with a higher risk of death.

THE CONVERSATION

Why it matters

Air pollution can negatively affect mental function after just a few hours of exposure. Studies show that air purifiers are effective at reducing particulates, but it's unclear whether these reductions can prevent cognitive harm from ongoing pollution sources like traffic. Research has been especially lacking in people living near major sources of air pollution, such as highways.

People living near highways or major roadways are exposed to more air pollution and also experience higher rates of air pollution-related diseases. These risks aren't encountered by all Americans equally: People of color and low-income people are more likely to live near highways or areas with heavy traffic.

Our study shows that HEPA air purifiers may offer meaningful health benefits under these circumstances.

What still isn't known

Research shows that air pollution begins to affect cognitive function especially strongly around age 40. These effects may become increasingly prominent as people age.

HEPA air purifiers may therefore be especially beneficial for older adults. Our study did not explore this possibility, as fewer than 10 of our 119 participants were over the age of 60.

Also, our participants only used a HEPA air purifier for one month. It's possible that longer durations of air purification may sustain or even increase the improvement in cognitive function we observed in our study.

Finally, it is unclear exactly how air purifiers improve cognition. Some studies suggest that exposure to particulate matter reduces the amount of the brain's white matter, which helps brain cells conduct electrical signals and maintains connections between brain regions.

The brain regions most harmed by air pollution are the ones that control mental flexibility and executive function, the same domains in which we saw improvements in our study.

We plan to study whether reducing particulate matter by using air purifiers is indeed protecting the brain's white matter, and whether it could reverse some cognitive decline. We will explore that possibility by studying how levels of molecules called metabolites, which cells produce as they do their jobs, change in response to breathing polluted air and air cleaned by a HEPA filter.

The Research Brief is a short take on interesting academic work.

Nicholas Pellegrino is a research associate in Public Health Sciences at the University of Connecticut. Doug Brugge is a professor of Public Health Science and Community Medicine at the University of Connecticut. Misha Eliasziw is an associate professor of Biostatistics, Public Health and Community Medicine at Tufts University. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

New cholesterol guidelines affect patients as young as 9

By KARL HILLE
The Baltimore Sun (TNS)

BALTIMORE — Updated for the first time in six years, clinical guidelines for screening and managing cholesterol now recommend earlier screenings – as young as nine years old – for those with a family history of heart disease, among other standards of care.

"Shifting the paradigm toward proactive prevention strategies earlier in life can meaningfully change the trajectory of cardiovascular disease and lead to better health outcomes for people decades later," Johns Hopkins cardiologist Seth Martin, a member of the guideline writing committee, said in a statement on the Hopkins website.

Introduced at the American College of Cardiology's annual Scientific Session in New Orleans on March 28, the guidelines include a new framework to help doctors calculate personalized risk assessments considering each patient's underlying conditions. These can include a family history of congested arteries, arthritis, early menopause, and several pregnancy-related issues like preeclampsia or gestational diabetes. The guidelines also encourage shared decision-making between doctors and patients and emphasize reducing blood levels of low-density lipoproteins, or bad cholesterol, and other fats and lipids at earlier ages.

"We know that lower LDL cholesterol levels are better when it comes to reducing the risk of heart attacks, strokes and congestive heart failure," Johns Hopkins Dr. Roger S. Blumenthal, chair of the guideline writing committee, said in the statement. "We also know that bringing elevated lipids and blood pressure down in young adults supports optimal heart and vascular health throughout a person's life."

> **"Shifting the paradigm toward proactive prevention strategies earlier in life can meaningfully change the trajectory of cardiovascular disease and lead to better health outcomes for people decades later."**
>
> **SETH MARTIN**
> Johns Hopkins cardiologist and member of the guideline writing committee

The guidelines were jointly published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology and Circulation on March 13.

They come at a time when one in 10 American adults has tested positive for high blood cholesterol, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Specialists believe the actual number of patients suffering from high cholesterol might be one in four adults. High blood cholesterol increases the risk of narrowing or hardening of the arteries, blocking blood flow, and increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Blumenthal said 80 percent to 90 percent of a patient's risk depends on habits that can be changed to support heart-healthy living and keep cholesterol levels within a normal range. These include eating a heart-healthy diet, engaging in regular, brisk physical activity, avoiding tobacco, getting enough sleep and maintaining a healthy weight. He said focusing on lifestyle interventions should be a first or foundational approach.

In addition to screening children with a family history of heart disease, the guideline recommends that everyone get a one-time screening for lipoprotein(a), which can reveal genetic factors that increase individual risk for heart disease by 40 percent or more. Additional testing can help doctors refine care for each patient.

Based on these guidelines, pregnant or lactating women, adults age 75 and older and those living with underlying conditions, such as diabetes, late-stage chronic kidney disease and HIV infection, as well as people undergoing treatment for cancer, should consult their doctor or cardiologists to ensure their best possible care, the Hopkins release states.

How to make a high-deductible health plan work for you

By JACKIE FORTIÉR and OONA ZENDA
KFF Health News (TNS)

An elementary school teacher chose a low-price health insurance plan but soon realized she wasn't clear about what it would mean for her family's finances.

When enhanced federal subsidies expired at the end of 2025, a lot of people buying their own health insurance on the state and federal exchanges saw their expected monthly rates jump. To keep costs down, many switched to a high-deductible health plan. These plans offer lower monthly payments, but in exchange patients can face steep out-of-pocket costs when they need care.

The plans are pretty common. In 2023, 30 percent of people who got insurance through their employer had a high-deductible plan, up from only 4 percent in 2006.

Madison Burgess, a teacher in San Diego, gets health insurance through her teaching job. But when she investigated adding her husband to her plan, it was just too expensive, so she started shopping on the exchange for a cheaper option for him.

The longer she scrolled through the plan options, the more overwhelming it felt. Insurance jargon made it hard to tell what her family would owe if her husband got sick.

"I didn't know what a deductible was, so I just went with what was cheap, and now I have regret," she said.

In exchange for that lower monthly premium payment, her husband's coverage won't kick in for most care until they've paid $5,800 in medical bills. Burgess didn't know that the deductible must be met before insurance picks up part of the tab.

How do you prepare for thousands of dollars in upfront costs? One option is a health savings account, or HSA, which lets you save pretax money and is now available to people enrolled in lower-tier state and federal exchange plans, including bronze and catastrophic coverage. These plans generally have the lowest premiums on the exchange but the highest out-of-pocket costs when you need care.

Burgess had chosen a bronze plan and didn't know HSAs were an option.

"I've never thought about having to put money away for a deductible," she said.

Burgess and others are often more worried about socking away money for unexpected car and house repairs or vet bills.

If, like Burgess, you chose cheaper health coverage for this year only to discover you're on the hook for meeting a high deductible, these tips can help you prepare.

You might qualify for an HSA and not know it

If you're enrolled in a bronze or catastrophic plan, you qualify to open a health savings account. Think of it as a medical piggy bank with tax perks. You put in pretax money, which lowers your taxable income. The money grows tax-free, and when you spend it on qualified medical expenses, those transactions are also tax-free. That's what people call a "triple tax advantage."

These accounts build a cushion for future health costs, such as doctor visits, prescriptions, and even products like over-the-counter medicine, tampons, and sunscreen.

The money typically can't be used for monthly premiums, but the account is yours to use for qualified medical expenses for yourself, your spouse, or your dependents anytime in the future. The money in the account is yours, even if you change jobs or health plans.

An HSA is not the same as a flexible spending account, or FSA. FSAs are tax-advantaged too but are offered only through employers. The money expires annually and you lose any remaining money when you leave that job.

HSA-curious? Here's how to open one

You open a health savings account through a bank or other financial institution. The institution will issue you a debit card so you can make purchases from the HSA.

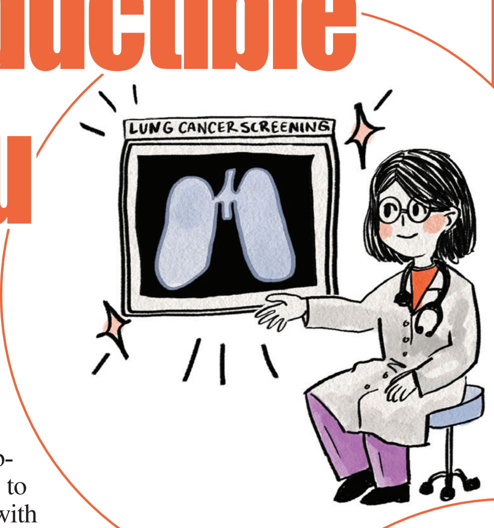
You can open an HSA at any point during the year as long as you're covered by an eligible plan. You can choose where to open the account, but be sure to check for any fees financial institutions charge and shop around.

If you get insurance through your job, your employer may require you to use a specific IRS-approved company.

Many people decide they can't afford to contribute to an HSA. For some households, the desire to set aside money for medical expenses competes with the need to pay rent and buy groceries.

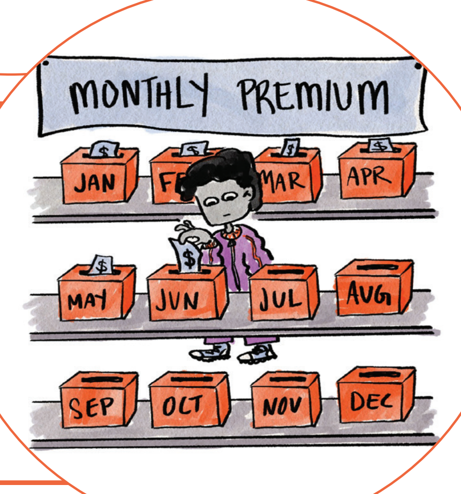
But there's a detail that can make it feel more manageable. Contributions don't have to be large. Just a few dollars a month can get you started.

There is, however, a limit. The IRS sets an annual cap on how much you're allowed to contribute to an HSA. In 2026, an individual is limited to $4,400, or $8,750 for a family plan. Under that ceiling, the amount is up to you.



All plans sold on marketplaces must cover certain preventive services at no cost to the patient as long as the care is provided in-network. Those services include routine immunizations and cancer screenings.

Photos by Oona Zenda / KFF Health News / TNS



Paying cash may save you money, but the amount you pay generally won't count toward your deductible or out-of-pocket maximum. "If you don't think you're ever going to hit your deductible – you're that young invincible, and your deductible is $10,000 – negotiate the cash price," says Caitlin Donovan, a senior director at the Patient Advocate Foundation.

Preventive services should be covered at no cost to you

All plans sold on marketplaces must cover certain preventive services at no cost to the patient as long as the care is provided in-network. Those services include routine immunizations and cancer screenings.

Beyond preventive care, understanding what different services cost can help you decide which type of medical appointment works best for your health needs and your wallet. For example, some plans charge less for a telehealth visit than to see your primary care doctor in person.

Check out your summary of benefits for more details.

Seek care early in the year

Most deductibles reset on Jan. 1. Scheduling appointments or surgeries early in the year can be strategic if you discover a condition that requires ongoing care. If you can afford it, meeting your deductible sooner can make the rest of the year significantly cheaper, said Caitlin Donovan, a senior director at the Patient Advocate Foundation.

Consider paying cash instead of spending down your deductible

Some hospitals, clinics, or other providers offer cheaper prices if you pay cash. You have the right to an itemized estimate and explanation of how much a health service would cost if you paid out-of-pocket. Ask for the estimate before you get care. Then, compare that price with what your insurance company tells you it would cost if you used your insurance. If you decide to go with a cash payment, you'll need to pay while you're still at the doctor's office, before charges get submitted to your insurance company.

Paying cash may save you money, but the amount you pay generally won't count toward your deductible or out-of-pocket maximum.

"If you don't think you're ever going to hit your deductible – you're that young invincible, and your deductible is $10,000 – negotiate the cash price," Donovan said.

On an ACA plan? Update your income and use an HSA to avoid a tax surprise

If you're on an ACA plan and you're eligible for subsidies, be aware: If your earnings change and you don't update your marketplace application, you could owe thousands of dollars at tax time.

An HSA is not the same as a flexible spending account, or FSA. FSAs are tax-advantaged too but are offered only through employers. The money expires annually and you lose any remaining money when you leave that job.

The fix is simple. Report raises, new jobs, or side gigs as they happen. If your income goes up, stashing money in an HSA can help because the money you put in the account doesn't count toward your taxable income.

As soon as you report an increase in your income, that could mean higher premiums (if you no longer qualify for the same subsidy), but experts say it's better to pay now than owe a big bill that you have to pay all at once.

"One of the biggest problems I see is someone is newly unemployed and they sign up for coverage, they say that they're not making any money, and then eventually they get a job and don't report it, and then they have this huge tax bill at the end," Donovan said.

She advises updating your marketplace profile as soon as your income changes, which could newly qualify you for Medicaid or a plan that contributes more toward your medical bills.

Health Care Helpline helps you navigate the health system hurdles between you and good care. The crowdsourced project is a joint production of NPR and KFF Health News. KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs of KFF – the independent source for health policy research, polling and journalism.

Rotavirus cases in children are rising

but a highly effective vaccine has slashed hospitalizations from the virus by 80% in 2 decades

By ANNETTE REGAN
University of California, Los Angeles (The Conversation)

Rotavirus is a highly contagious virus that spreads easily and can make babies and young children very sick. This year, doctors have been seeing more cases earlier in the season than usual.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that almost 8 in 100 people tested for rotavirus have the virus. This is only a little higher than last year at this time, when about 7 in 100 tests were positive. However, doctors are concerned because rotavirus cases started rising earlier than usual – in January – which means more children are getting sick over a longer period of time.

Often referred to as a stomach flu or stomach bug, rotavirus infection can cause extreme diarrhea, leading to severe dehydration and hospitalization. Just like measles and whooping cough, infectious diseases that are also on the rise, rotavirus can be prevented with a safe and highly effective vaccine. But vaccination rates in the U.S. have fallen since 2018.

The Conversation asked epidemiologist Annette Regan to explain why this virus is on the rise and what families can do to protect themselves from the illness.

What is rotavirus and why is it dangerous?

Rotavirus, first identified in 1973, affects the gastrointestinal system – that is, the stomach and the intestines.

Rotavirus spreads from person to person, often when germs from poop get on hands or surfaces and then into the mouth. But a person can also become infected by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their mouth, or by drinking or eating contaminated food or water.

Rotavirus causes sudden diarrhea, vomiting and fever that can cause rapid dehydration, which can lead to death if left untreated. There is no medicine to cure the virus. Doctors can only help by giving fluids and watching closely for dehydration. Babies who lose too much fluid may need care in the hospital.

Rotavirus most often affects infants and young children. Without vaccination, nearly all children have a rotavirus infection by age 5.

The virus causes most instances of hospitalization due to severe diarrhea and is the leading cause of death due to diarrhea in children under 5. Older children and adults typically experience more mild infections, but the virus can cause severe illness in people with weakened immune systems and those over 65.

A safe and effective vaccine

Safe and effective vaccines against rotavirus have been available in the U.S. since 2006.

U.S. regulators approved an early rotavirus vaccine, but it was taken off the market the next year after doctors learned that, in very rare cases, it could cause a serious bowel problem. The rotavirus vaccines used today are different. Studies in more than 70,000 babies show that these vaccines are safe and work well.

Before vaccines were introduced, rotavirus accounted for more than 400,000 medical visits, including 200,000 emergency room visits, 70,000 hospitalizations and 20-60 deaths in the U.S. each year.

Annually, vaccination prevents an estimated 40,000-50,000 hospitalizations of infants in America. Since 2006, hospitalizations due to rotavirus have dropped by 80% and emergency room visits by 57 percent.

Recent rotavirus surge

Rotavirus is a springtime illness in America. Cases usually increase over the winter and reach their highest point around April or May, then drop off as the weather gets warmer in the summer.

Since January 2026, doctors have been seeing more rotavirus in babies and young children than usual. According to CDC data, about 3 percent of rotavirus tests in January were positive, when normally only about 1 percent of tests are positive. That rate is now peaking at nearly 8 percent of tests.

Scientists have also found more rotavirus by monitoring community sewage to track how germs are spreading. The levels of virus in sewage have gone up by about 40% since February. Together, this tells doctors that rotavirus is spreading more widely and lasting longer than it usually does, which is why they are watching it closely.

Rotavirus vaccine rates in the U.S. have been declining – 77 percent of children received the full vaccine series by 8 months of age in 2018 compared to 74 percent of children in 2024. That leaves more infants susceptible to infection. Rotavirus surges are generally shorter in areas where more people are vaccinated against it, meaning they could last longer in areas with lower vaccination coverage.

In January 2026, the Department of Health and Human Services shifted rotavirus vaccination from a universal recommendation to a decision to be made by families and their health care providers. Although this change was recently paused by a U.S. judge, this has left public health officials increasingly concerned that rotavirus vaccination rates could continue to decline.

Preventing rotavirus infection

Proper hand-washing can help reduce rotavirus transmission, but because rotavirus is highly contagious, preventing the disease through vaccination is the most effective form of protection.

There are two oral, live-attenuated rotavirus vaccines available for infants in the U.S. The first dose must be given before 15 weeks of age, and all doses must be completed by 8 months of age.

Rotavirus vaccines reduce the risk of severe disease in infants by 85 percent to 90 percent. This means fewer hospital visits, less risk of dehydration and more babies staying healthy at home.

But these benefits last only when most babies get vaccinated. When vaccination rates drop, rotavirus can spread more easily, and more infants, especially the youngest ones, can get seriously ill. Keeping vaccination rates high helps protect individual babies and keeps the whole community safer.

Annette Regan is an adjunct associate professor of epidemiology at the University of California, Los Angeles. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

FINANCE

Dana Rothstein / Dreamstime / TNS

Lenders typically require a home appraisal before approving a mortgage refinance, because it helps them assess the home's value and condition to ensure the loan makes financial sense.

Refinance appraisal

How it works and what to expect

By JEFF OSTROWSKI
Bankrate.com (TNS)

When refinancing your mortgage, your lender will likely have a professional appraise your home to determine its value. Appraisal results can impact your new loan, such as determining whether you need to pay for private mortgage insurance (PMI).

Knowing what to expect from the appraisal can help you navigate the refinance process with more confidence.

What is a refinance appraisal?

A refinance appraisal is often part of the underwriting process when refinancing your current mortgage to a new one. As with the appraisal conducted when you first purchased the home, a refinance appraisal evaluates the property's condition and compares it to similar homes nearby in order to determine its value. The process may be more streamlined for a refi, especially if you're working with the same lender.

Why do lenders require home appraisals for a refinance?

Lenders typically require a home appraisal before approving a mortgage refinance, because it helps them assess the home's value and condition to ensure the loan makes financial sense.

An appraisal can serve several purposes:

■ Confirming the home's value: The appraisal assesses your home's current value, ensuring the lender isn't offering more than the property is worth, since the home serves as collateral if you default.

■ Evaluating the property's condition: The appraisal also provides the lender with a snapshot of how well the home has been maintained and how it compares to similar properties in the area.

■ Measuring your home equity: Your equity – the difference between the home's appraised value and your remaining loan balance – determines how much cash you may be able to take out with a cash-out refinance. It also determines whether or not you'll need to pay PMI.

BANKRATE'S TAKE: Appraisals are crucial for lenders to protect their investment, but a refinance appraisal can work in the borrower's favor, too. For example, if you've made any updates or improvements since you bought your home, it may have increased in value more than you realize. And if you're looking into a cash-out refinance, a higher appraised value could enable you to borrow a larger amount of money.

What factors do refinance appraisers consider?

Several aspects of your home are analyzed to help the appraiser estimate its value in the current market, including:

■ Location: Appraisers consider your home's proximity to schools, parks, shopping and other amenities. They also evaluate recent sales of similar homes in your area.

■ Size: They assess your home's square footage and lot size, as well as the number of bedrooms and bathrooms.

■ Interior systems: Appraisers assess your plumbing, heating/AC, electrical and other major home systems.

■ Exterior: Garages, decks, porches, pools, landscaping and general curb appeal are also taken into account.

■ Home improvements: Updates to key areas, such as the kitchen, bathrooms and roofing, may boost your home's value. If you're refinancing with the same lender or appraiser, they may give extra attention to changes or upgrades made since the original loan.

How the appraisal process works

A refinance appraisal typically occurs early in the loan process. The timeline can vary by lender, but generally takes a few days to complete and follows these basic steps:

■ Once your refinance application is underway, the lender will order an appraisal from an independent, licensed professional to assess the current value of your home.

■ The appraiser contacts you to schedule a time to visit the property in person. In most cases, you can be present for the visit.

■ During their visit, the appraiser evaluates both the interior and exterior of the home. The physical inspection typically lasts anywhere from 20 minutes to a few hours, depending on the size and complexity of the property.

■ The appraiser also reviews recent comparable sales in your area, referred to in real estate lingo as "comps."

■ Finally, the appraiser prepares a report estimating the market value of your home, which is sent to your lender.

BANKRATE'S TAKE: During the pandemic housing boom, when rates were super-low, appraisals were a chokepoint for deals – there was more demand for appraisals than appraisers available to complete them. In a bit of good news for current refinance borrowers, the housing market has slowed enough that appraisals no longer hold up deals.

Refinance appraisal vs. purchase appraisal

Refinance and purchase appraisals follow a similar process, but they differ in a couple key respects:

■ Purchase appraisals: These rely on the home's agreed-upon sale price as a reference point. The appraiser uses that figure as a benchmark. The borrower is not present for these, since the home is not theirs yet.

■ Refinance appraisals: These do not have a sale contract to guide the valuation. Instead, the appraiser bases the home's value entirely on factors such as comps, property condition and current market trends. The borrower can usually be present for refinance appraisals, which allows you to point out any upgrades or repairs that may help support a higher valuation.

What your refinance appraisal means

The appraised value of your home helps determine your equity, loan terms and whether the refinance can move forward.

■ If the appraised value meets expectations: The appraisal confirms the property is sufficient collateral for the loan amount, and the loan can proceed without major changes.

■ If the appraised value is higher than expected: A higher-than-expected appraisal can give you more flexibility in your refinance. You may qualify for a better interest rate based on your increased equity. If you were paying PMI and the appraisal pushes your equity past 20 percent, you may be able to eliminate that cost. A higher value may also let you borrow more through a cash-out refinance.

■ If the appraised value is lower than expected: If the appraisal comes in low, the lender might reduce the loan amount, require PMI or even deny the refinance.

What to do if your home appraisal is low

If you disagree with the appraised value and think it should be higher, you have a few options:

■ Review the report for errors: Comb through it carefully to ensure it accurately reflects the features and condition of your home.

■ Submit a reconsideration of value: If you find inaccuracies or better comps, you can ask the lender to challenge the appraisal by submitting supporting evidence.

■ Request a second appraisal: Some lenders will allow a second opinion (although the cost comes out of your pocket).

■ Adjust your refinance strategy: If the low appraisal limits your options, you may need to adjust your loan amount or switch to a different loan type.

■ Start over: If you're not satisfied with the results, you can always choose a different lender and start fresh, hoping for a more favorable outcome.

How much does a refinance appraisal cost?

The cost of a refinance appraisal can vary based on the size, condition and location of your home, among other things. According to HomeAdvisor, a typical home appraisal costs between $314 and $424, with the average being $358.

Appraisal fees are usually included in the closing costs a mortgage borrower pays, though they may be rolled into the loan instead in some cases.

FAQs

■ Do I always need an appraisal to refinance? Not all refinances require an appraisal – some government refinance options allow you to skip the appraisal entirely if you qualify. The decision, however, is entirely up to the lender. Bank of America, for example, requires a refinance appraisal "to accurately assess the value of the property and the risk of the transaction," says Ann Thompson, a retired specialty lending executive for the bank.

■ What's the difference between a home appraisal and a home inspection? The two are similar, but a home appraiser and a home inspector are looking at your home through different lenses. An appraisal estimates your home's current market value to determine loan eligibility. A home inspection, on the other hand, evaluates the property's physical condition to determine its safety and structural soundness.

■ Are there any alternatives to an in-person appraisal? Yes – in some cases, a traditional in-person appraisal may not be required for a refinance. Certain loan programs and borrower qualifications allow for other alternatives. Options may include:Desktop appraisal: This type of appraisal is completed remotely using public records, MLS data, tax assessments and other digital property details.Hybrid appraisal: A representative collects data and photos onsite, while a licensed appraiser reviews the information and completes the valuation from a separate location.Drive-by appraisal: Also known as an exterior-only appraisal, this involves the appraiser evaluating the property from the outside without entering the home. It's sometimes used for FHA or VA refinances and became more common during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key takeaways

■ Refinancing your current mortgage typically requires a new appraisal of the home.

■ The refinance appraisal helps the bank determine the home's current value, so they can define the parameters of the loan they're willing to extend.

■ Appraisers will consider most of the same criteria they did in your home's initial appraisal, including its size, condition and location.

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Douglas Rissing / Getty Images

How Trump's repeated efforts to fire Federal Reserve Chair Powell harm the economy – and make battling inflation harder

By ANA CAROLINA GARRIGA
Professor or Political Science, Department of Government, University of Essex
and CRISTINA BODEA
Professor of Political Science, Michigan State University (The Conversation)

President Donald Trump has again threatened to oust Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, putting at risk a keystone of good economic policy and inflation management: central bank independence.

The president said on April 15, 2026, that he would fire Powell if the Fed chair stayed on in that role after his term officially ends on May 15. Powell has said he intends to remain at the helm after that if his replacement has not yet been confirmed by the Senate. Legally, Powell is allowed to do this.

Trump has promised to fire Powell a number of times, and his Department of Justice has launched a criminal investigation into renovations at the Fed building. Trump has also tried to oust another Fed governor, Lisa Cook, over allegations of mortgage fraud. In an unprecedented video response to the investigation, Powell called it and other actions "pretexts" for Trump's ultimate goal of getting the Fed to lower interest rates.

While Trump's actions are seen as particularly aggressive, as political economists, we are not surprised to see politicians try to exert influence on central banks. For one thing, central banks remain part of the government bureaucracy, and independence granted to them can always be reversed – either by changing laws or backtracking on established practices.

An economic power struggle

At the heart of threats to Powell and Cook – and other moves to undermine the Fed by the Trump administration – is a power struggle.

Central banks, which are public institutions that manage a country's currency and its monetary policy, have an extraordinary amount of power. By controlling the flow of money and credit in a country, they can affect economic growth, inflation, employment and financial stability.

These are powers that many politicians would like to control or at least manipulate. That's because monetary policy can provide governments with economic boosts at key times, such as ahead of elections or during periods of falling popularity.

The problem is that short-lived, politically motivated moves may be detrimental to the long-term economic well-being of a nation. They may, in other words, saddle the economy with problems further down the line.

That is why central banks across the globe tend to receive significant leeway to set interest rates independently and free from the electoral wishes of politicians.

In fact, monetary policymaking that is data-driven and technocratic, rather than politically motivated, has been seen as the gold standardof governance of national finances since the early 1990s and has largely achieved its main purpose of keeping inflationrelatively low and stable.

But despite independence being seen to work, central banks overthe past decade have come under increased pressure from politicians.

Trump is one recent example. In his first term as president, he criticized his own choice to head the Federal Reserve and demanded lower interest rates.

Attacks on the Fed have accelerated in Trump's second administration. In April 2025, Trump lashed out at Powell in an online post, accusing him of being "TOO LATE AND WRONG" on interest rate cuts, while suggesting that the central banker's "termination cannot come fast enough!" And in August, Trump took the unprecedented step of firing Cook, which a court later blocked. The Supreme Court is expected to issue a ruling in the case this year.

Moreover, the reason politicians may want to interfere in monetary policy is that low interest rates remain a potent, quick method to boost an economy. And while politicians know that there are costs to besieging an independent central bank – financial markets may react negatively, or inflationmay flare up – short-term control of a powerful policy tool can prove irresistible.

Legislating independence

If monetary policy is such a coveted policy tool, how have central banks held off politicians and stayed independent? And is this independence being eroded?

Broadly, central banks are protected by laws that offer long tenures to their leadership, allow them to focus policy primarily on inflation, and severely limit lending to the government.

Of course, such legislation cannot anticipate all future contingencies, which may open the door for political interference or for practices that break the law. And sometimes, central bankers are unceremoniously fired.

However, laws do keep politicians in line. For example, even in authoritarian countries, laws protecting central banks from political interference have helped reduce inflation and restricted central bank lending to the government.

In our own research, we have detailed the ways that laws have insulated central banks from the rest of the government, but also the recent trend of eroding this legal independence.

Politicizing appointees

Around the world, appointments to central bank leadership are political – elected politicians select candidates based on career credentials, political affiliation and, importantly, their dislike or tolerance of inflation.

But lawmakers in different countries exercise different degrees of political control.

A 2025 study shows that the large majority of central bank leaders – about 70 percent – are appointed by the head of government alone or with the intervention of other members of the executive branch. This ensures that the preferences of the central bank are closer to the government's, which can boost the central bank's legitimacy in democratic countries, but at the risk of permeability to political influence.

Alternatively, appointments can involve the legislative power or even the central bank's own board. In the U.S., while the president nominates members of the Federal Reserve Board, the Senate can and has rejected unconventional or incompetent candidates.

Moreover, even if appointments are political, many central bankers stay in office long after the people who appointed them have been voted out. At the end of 2023, the most common length of the governors' appointment was five years, and in 41 countries, the legal mandate was six years or longer.

And the Fed chair position has traditionally been protected by law, as Powell himself acknowledged in November 2024: "We're not removable except for cause. We serve very long terms, seemingly endless terms. So we're protected into law. Congress could change that law, but I don't think there's any danger of that."

In the 2000s, several countries shortened the tenure of their central banks' governors to four or five years. Sometimes, this was part of broader restrictions in central bank independence, as was the case in Iceland in 2001, Ghana in 2002 and Romania in 2004.

The low inflation objective

As of 2023, all but six central banks globally had low inflation as their main goal. Yet many central banks are required by law to try to achieve additional and sometimes conflicting goals, such as financial stability, full employment or support for the government's policies.

This is the case for 38 central banks that either have the explicit dual mandate of price stability and employment or more complex goals. In Argentina, for example, the central bank's mandate is to provide "employment and economic development with social equity."

Conflicting objectives can open central banks to politicization. In the U.S., the Federal Reserve has a dual mandate of stable prices and maximum sustainable employment. These goals are often complementary, and economists have argued that low inflation is a prerequisite for sustainable high levels of employment.

But in times of overlapping high inflation and high unemployment, such as in the late 1970s or when the COVID-19 crisis was winding down in 2022, the Fed's dual mandate has become active territory for political wrangling.

Since 2000, at least 23 countries have expanded the focus of their central banks beyond just inflation.

Limits on government lending

The first central banks were created to help secure finance for governments fightingwars. But today, limiting lending to governments is at the core of protecting price stability from unsustainable fiscal spending.

History is dotted with the consequences of not doing so. In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, central banks in Latin America printed money to support their governments' spending goals. But it resulted in massive inflation while not securing growth or political stability.

Today, limits on lending are strongly associated with lower inflation in the developing world. And central banks with high levels of independence can reject a government's financing requests or dictate the terms of loans.

Yet over the past two decades, almost 40 countries have made their central banks less able to limit central government funding. In the more extreme examples – such as in Belarus, Ecuador or even New Zealand – they have turned the central bank into a potential financier for the government.

Scapegoating central bankers

In recent years, governments have tried to influence central banks by pushing for lower interest rates, making statements criticizing bank policy or calling for meetings with central bank leadership.

At the same time, politicians have blamed the same central bankers for a number of perceived failings: not anticipating economic shocks such as the 2007-09 financial crisis; exceeding their authority with quantitative easing; or creating massive inequality or instability while trying to save the financial sector.

And since mid-2021, major central banks have struggled to keep inflation low, raising questions from populist and antidemocratic politicians about the merits of an arm's-length relationship.

But chipping away at central bank independence, particularly in the name of lowering interest rates to boost the economy, as Trump appears to be doing by threatening to fire the Fed chair and his attempted removal of a member of the bank's Board of Governors, is a historically sure way to high inflation.

This is an updated version of an article that was originally published on June 14, 2024.

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Metrocreative

Throw your own spring pizza party

By NICOLE HVIDSTEN
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

For something relatively simple at its core, pizza can simultaneously spark debate and provide comfort like few other foods.

Its range of fans is impressive, from picky kids who sustain on cheese pizza to connoisseurs with impressive wood-fire pizza ovens in their backyards. But no matter where you fall on the pizza spectrum, there's always room to improve. Enter King Arthur Baking Company's new "The Book of Pizza: Recipes for Every Pizza Maker," with more than 250 pages of tips, tricks, recipes and serving suggestions to level up your pie game.

Learn how to make (and the difference between) New York style, Detroit style, Chicago style, Neapolitan and Pizza alla Panna. Perfect a tomato sauce with only two ingredients, and give yourself a cheese education. Wonder what flour to use? No worries – King Arthur is baking royalty for a reason.

Find scratch pizza solutions for lazy weekends or weeknight dinners. Not sure where to turn? The book's pizza flowchart will tell you what style is best for you at the moment. Have you embraced sourdough? That makes good pizza, too. The options really are limitless, and the in-depth instructions are suitable for both beginner and experienced cooks. No need to already be a dough pro.

While the majority of the book is pizza-centric, it goes a step further by guiding users through dipping sauces (make your own hot honey or ranch), side dishes and more, making it one-stop recipe shopping.

For dessert, we turned to another new cookbook, "Bittersweet: The Five Tastes of Dessert and Beyond" by Thalia Ho. The book explores those five tastes – bitter, sweet, sour, salt and umami – and offers recipes incorporating them. It's a luscious and introspective book that's as much about feeling as it is cooking. And we thought Ho's Walnut and Honey Semifreddo was the perfect exclamation point on our pizza party.

Butter Lettuce Salad with Herby Buttermilk-Avocado Dressing

Serves 4 to 6

Here, billowy butter lettuce is speckled with all the soft herbs of early spring. Slivers of radish and cucumber provide crunch, a handful of peas adds pops of sweetness, and the avocado adds creaminess – both in the salad itself and in the tangy dressing. From King Arthur Baking Company's "The Book of Pizza: Recipes for Every Pizza Maker" (Simon Element, 2026).

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 1/2 c. buttermilk, well shaken, plus more as needed
- 2 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 clove garlic, grated
- 1 small avocado, halved, pitted and peeled
- 1/2 c. fresh soft herbs of your choice, such as cilantro, basil, parsley, dill and/or chervil
- 1 tsp. honey
- 3/4 tsp. fine salt, plus more to taste
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste

FOR THE SALAD:

- 2 heads butter lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces (about 10 c.)
- 8 radishes, sliced paper thin
- 1 English or 2 Persian cucumbers, sliced 1/4 in. thick
- 1 c. shelled fresh peas
- 1 small avocado, halved, pitted, peeled and diced
- Fine salt and freshly ground black pepper

MAKE THE DRESSING: Combine the buttermilk, lime juice, garlic, avocado, herbs, honey, salt and pepper in a blender and blend until creamy and emulsified. Thin as needed with additional buttermilk, 1 teaspoon at a time, if desired. Season to taste with additional salt and pepper. The dressing can be made ahead and stored in a lidded container in the fridge for up to 3 days.

FOR THE SALAD: Spoon 1/2 cup of the dressing into the bottom of a large serving bowl. Top with the lettuce, radishes, cucumber and peas. Toss together until evenly coated. Add the diced avocado and toss gently to combine. Season the salad with salt and pepper and serve right away, with additional dressing on the side.

Popeye

Makes one (11-inch) pizza

Spinach is the defining feature of a Popeye pizza, of course, but this is sneakily also a three-cheese pie featuring ricotta (for creaminess), feta (big flavor) and mozzarella (for stretch!). If your ricotta is at all wet, place it in a fine-mesh sieve set over a bowl and drain for 15 to 30 minutes before using. The fresh basil leaves seem like they should be optional, but here they really aren't: They add a vital freshness to the pie, not to mention some pretty greenery. From King Arthur Baking Company's "The Book of Pizza: Recipes for Every Pizza Maker" (Simon Element, 2026).

- 1/3 c. whole-milk ricotta
- 2 cloves Garlic Confit (see below), mashed to a paste, plus more cloves for garnish
- 1/4 tsp. fine salt, plus more to taste
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 c. fresh baby spinach
- 1/4 packed c. fresh basil leaves, chopped, plus small leaves for garnish
- 1 scallion, thinly sliced crosswise
- 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- All-purpose flour, for dusting
- 1 ball Weeknight White Dough (see recipe)
- Semolina flour or cornmeal, for dusting
- 1/2 c. low-moisture whole-milk mozzarella, shredded
- 1/4 c. feta, crumbled
- 1 tsp. Garlic Confit oil, for finishing

Arrange racks in the lower and upper thirds of the oven. Place a baking steel or stone on the lower rack and preheat the oven to 500 degrees for at least 1 hour.

In a small bowl, stir together the ricotta, mashed garlic confit, salt and pepper. In a medium bowl, combine the spinach, chopped basil and scallion. Drizzle with the olive oil and toss to coat.

Shape the pizza: Dust your work surface with flour and place the dough on it. Without distorting the round dough, flip it over so that both sides are coated with flour. Use your fingertips to gently depress the center of the dough, being careful not to touch the outer edge of the crust. This step is important – leaving the circumference untouched at this stage will result in a beautiful bubbly outer crust postbake. Continue using your fingertips to press the center of the dough outward until you have an 8-inch circle. Again, taking care not to touch the outermost edge of the crust, lift the pizza from the work surface and use your knuckles to gently stretch the dough into an 11-inch round. If the dough is at all sticky, use more flour. Use two hands at once to gently move the dough in a circle, allowing gravity to do most of the work for you, rather than pulling on the dough. If the dough resists stretching, return it to your floured work surface and let it rest for 5 to 10 minutes to allow the gluten to relax, then try again.

Lightly dust a peel or an overturned baking sheet with semolina and transfer the shaped dough to the peel. If the dough retracts when transferring it to the peel, gently re-form it. Shimmy the dough on the peel to ensure it's not sticking; if it is, lift the edge of the crust and add more semolina.

Spread the ricotta mixture over the dough in an even layer, leaving a 1/2-inch border. Top with the spinach mixture, piling it more heavily on the outer edge (but avoiding the crust), then distribute the mozzarella and feta over the spinach.

Bake: Use the peel to transfer the pizza onto the steel or stone, then bake for 3 to 4 minutes. Check the bottom of the crust – it should be spotted and charred in places, and the edge crust should have some color. If not, rotate the pizza and bake for another 1 to 2 minutes.

When the bottom has sufficient color, use the peel to transfer the pizza to the top rack, switch the oven to broil, and broil for 2 to 3 minutes, until well charred in spots. (Don't walk away – pizza can go from perfectly charred to burnt quickly.)

Use the peel to remove the pizza from the oven and slide it onto a wire rack. Drizzle with the garlic confit oil and scatter whole basil leaves over. Top with additional whole confit garlic cloves. Slice and serve.

To make garlic confit: Combine 6 ounces of garlic (about 36 cloves) and 1 c. olive oil in a small oven-safe baking dish or loaf pan. The garlic cloves need to be completely covered by the oil; if they aren't, add additional oil to cover. Bake the garlic in a 300-degree oven until the cloves are very tender, about 90 minutes. Let cool to room temperature in the oil, then use immediately or transfer to a lidded jar and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

"The Book of Pizza" from King Arthur Baking Company.

King Arthur Baking Company / TNS

Weeknight White Dough

Makes enough for two 11-inch pizzas

When we say "weeknight pizza," we're referring to homemade pizza that you can get on the table for dinner – even if you don't give a single thought to dinner until 5 p.m. Granted, a little foresight never hurts. Though it can be on the table in as little as two and a half hours (most of it downtime), its real superpower is that it can be kept in the refrigerator for 24 hours. From King Arthur Baking Company's "The Book of Pizza: Recipes for Every Pizza Maker" (Simon Element, 2026).

- 2 1/2 c. unbleached all-purpose flour or 00 flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 tsp. fine salt
- 1 1/2 tsp. instant yeast
- 1 1/2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3/4 c. plus 3 tbsp. and 2 tsp. lukewarm water (85 to 90 degrees)

MAKE THE DOUGH: In a large bowl, combine the flour, salt and yeast, then add the oil and water. Mix to combine, then knead the dough by hand in the bowl until you have a rough but cohesive dough. Cover the bowl and let the dough rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Uncover the dough and perform a bowl fold: With a wet hand (which will help keep the dough from sticking to you), grab a section of dough from one side, lift it up, then press it down into the middle. Repeat, turning the bowl 90 degrees (a quarter turn) after each stretch, until the dough won't elongate easily and forms a smooth, tight round ball, 4 to 6 times total. Turn the dough over, placing it seam side down in the bowl. Cover and let the dough rise at room temperature (70 to 75 degrees) for 1 hour, until puffy but not necessarily doubled in size. Toward the end of the rising time, preheat the oven to 500 degrees with a baking steel or stone placed on a rack in the lower third and an empty oven rack in the upper third.

Divide the dough: On a lightly floured surface, divide the dough into 2 equal pieces. Form each piece into a tight ball and place seam side down in a lightly greased container. Cover with a lid and let it rest at room temperature while the oven preheats, 20 to 60 minutes. The dough is now ready to use. Alternatively, the dough can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours; remove the dough from the refrigerator 1 hour before shaping and baking your pizzas.

Walnut and Honey Semifreddo

Serves 6 to 8

From "Bittersweet: The Five Tastes of Dessert and Beyond" by Thalia Ho, who writes: "For me, few things are as sweet and sentimental as semifreddo. It's simple but elegant, and it has a power that lasts long after a mouthful has ended. I like mine with praline and honey, in addition to Nocino, an aromatic bittersweet liqueur that's made from unripe walnuts." Note that the recipe requires a candy thermometer, and you'll need to prepare the dessert a day ahead to give it time to freeze. (Harvest, 2026).

FOR THE PRALINE:

- 3/4 c. plus 2 tbsp. walnuts
- 1/2 c. plus 2 tbsp. granulated sugar

FOR THE SEMIFREDDO:

- 2 c. heavy cream
- 1/4 c. honey
- 2 tbsp. Nocino liqueur
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 6 large egg yolks

Adjust a rack to the middle of the oven, then preheat it to 350 degrees.

Make the praline: Scatter the walnuts into an even layer over a lined baking sheet. Roast for 8 to 10 minutes, until golden brown and fragrant. Cool completely.

Next, combine the sugar with 1/3 cup water in a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil and cook, without stirring, until an amber-hued liquid has formed. Remove and pour over the roasted walnuts. Set aside to harden, then chop rough or fine, depending on your preference.

Make the semifreddo: Line an 8- by 4- by 3-inch loaf pan with a few layers of plastic wrap, leaving an overhang over the sides.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip the cream, honey, liqueur and vanilla to stable peaks on medium speed. Be careful not to overdo it; you want it supple enough to fold in later without too much resistance. Transfer to the refrigerator and chill until needed.

Next, put the sugar and 1/3 cup water into a medium saucepan. Attach a candy thermometer to the side. Heat over medium heat, swirling occasionally, until the granules have dissolved. Raise the heat to high and bring to a rapid boil. Continue to cook until the syrup has reached thread stage, around 230 degrees. Meanwhile, start whisking the egg yolks in the bowl of a stand mixer. Start on low at first, then increase the speed as the syrup nears temperature. Carefully stream the boiling syrup into the yolks, between the whisk and the side of the bowl. Turn the speed to high and continue to whisk until pale, thick, and tripled in volume. All the steam will have escaped, and the bowl will no longer be hot to the touch.

With a large rubber spatula, gently fold thirds of the whipped cream into the yolk mixture, trying to retain as much lightness and air as possible.

Fold in the praline. Scrape into the prepared pan, smoothing out the top with an offset palette knife. Cover with aluminum foil and freeze until firm, at least 8 hours or, preferably, overnight.

Unmold the semifreddo onto a serving plate. Slice with a warm, sharp knife and serve soon after. This will keep, covered, in the coldest part of the freezer for 5 days.

Summer movies A-Z

All the biggest blockbusters headed to theaters

By ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News (TNS)

This year, the summer movie season begins with a walk down the runway. “The Devil Wears Prada 2” opens Friday, kicking off four months of fun in the sun at the movies.

The May 1 weekend is oftentimes reserved for a superhero tentpole, but this year, Meryl Streep’s Miranda Priestly is the one welcoming audiences into summer.

From there, big-time franchises (“Star Wars,” “Toy Story,” “Spider-Man”) and big-name directors (Christopher Nolan, Steven Spielberg) take over, giving crowds numerous ways to beat the heat indoors.

We’ve laid out some of the biggest movies headed to theaters from May through the end of August, and we’ve done so from A to Z. Plan accordingly, but remember, release dates are always subject to change.

The Summer 2026 movie season, A-Z:

A: Anne Hathaway

Anne Hathaway returns to Runway in “The Devil Wears Prada 2,” the sequel to the 2006 hit that kicks off the summer movie season when it opens on Friday. But she’s not done, not by a long shot. Ms. Hathaway is currently starring as a pop singer in David Lowry’s “Mother Mary” (now in theaters), she stars with Ewan McGregor in “The End of Oak Street” (Aug. 14), which marks the return of David Robert Mitchell (“It Follows”), and she’s also in a little movie by Christopher Nolan that we’ll talk about here in a bit. Clear the way, it’s Hathaway Summer!

B: Buzz Lightyear

It’s Buzz Lightyear vs. an iPad in “Toy Story 5,” the latest adventure featuring the original Pixar crew of Woody, Slinky Dog, Mr. Potato Head and the rest of Andy’s toys. It’s been 31 years since the original “Toy Story” hit theaters and carved out a space inside moviegoers’ hearts, and seven years since the series’ last installment. This time they’re going up against technology. Our money’s on the toys. (June 19)

C: ‘Cliffhanger’

OK, count of three, let’s both at the same time say the first thing we think of when we say Sylvester Stallone. 1, 2, 3... Lily James! Oh, that’s not what you said? Either way, Lily James – she of “Cinderella” and “Pam & Tommy” fame – is gearing up for a reboot of Stallone’s 1993 rock climbing thriller “Cliffhanger,” directed by Jaume Collet-Serra. Hang on for dear life! (Aug. 28)

D: ‘Death of Robin Hood’

Hugh Jackman stars as an aging, grizzled Robin Hood in “The Death of Robin Hood,” in which he presumably dies (is it a spoiler if it’s in the title?), which also stars Jodie Comer and Bill Skarsgård. Michael Sarnoski (“Pig,” “A Quiet Place: Day One”) writes and directs. (June 19)

E: Eilish

Billie Eilish teams up with up-and-coming director James Cameron (the “Avatar” movies, something called “Titanic”) for “Billie Eilish – Hit Me Hard and Soft: The Tour (Live in 3D),” which certainly has a mouthful of a title. (A dash, a colon, and two parentheses? Impressive!) With Cameron at the helm, it should be a showstopper, beyond the normal realm of a concert film. That’s the hope, at least. (May 8)

F: ‘Fall 2’

You saw ”Fall,” right? Sparse thriller, fun movie. Two friends climb up a pole in the middle of the desert and get stranded up top, 2,000 feet in the air. That’s it! This follow-up centers on Jax (Harriet Slater), the sister of one of the original climbers, who winds up stranded 2,000 feet in the air while climbing a mountain in Taipei. Hate when that happens! Peter and Michael Spierig direct. (Aug. 7)

G: Grogu

Don’t call him Baby Yoda! Grogu teams up with his pal the Mandalorian for “The Mandalorian and Grogu,” the first Star Wars movie since 2019’s “Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker,” and it centers on the adventures of the bounty hunter (played by Pedro Pascal) and his trusty little pal. Jon Favreau directs. (May 22)

H: Horror

Lots of horror movies are due out in the coming months, which is a good thing for all the freaks and weirdos out there. “Hokum” is a haunted vacation home thriller with Adam Scott (May 1); “Obsession” is a be-careful-what-you-wish-for tale about a guy who makes a wish his crush would be obsessed with him (May 15); road trips might never be the same after “Passenger” (May 22); Chiwetel Ejiofor and Renate Reinsve dive into the internet horror world of “Backrooms” (May 29); director Sébastien Vanicek delivers the latest “Evil Dead” chapter, “Evil Dead Burn” (July 10); Eli Roth pays a visit to the “Ice Cream Man” (Aug. 7); and the “Insidious” world returns with “Insidious: Out of the Further” (Aug. 27). Happy haunting!

I: ‘I Love Boosters’

Boots Riley returns, eight years after “Sorry to Bother You,” with this tripped-out take on fashion, government conspiracies, class inequity and all sorts of other fun stuff, funneled through the bizarre fantasia that is his mind. With Keke Palmer, Taylour Paige, Eiza González and Demi Moore. (May 22)

J: ‘Jackass: Best and Last’

The “Jackass” gang is still putting their bodies through hell to make you laugh. So go laugh with them as they do it for the fifth (and hopefully final, for the sake of themselves) time. Then again, we also thought the last one was going to be the last one, so who knows? (June 26)

K: Krypto

Milly Alcock is “Supergirl” and Krypto is her trusted pooch in this follow-up to last year’s “Superman,” in which Alcock’s character was briefly introduced. “I, Tonya’s” Craig Gillespie directs this super-story, which also stars Matthias Schoenaerts, Eve Ridley and Jason Momoa. (June 26)

L: Looney Tunes

You asked for it, you got it! “Coyote vs. Acme” was originally shelved by Warner Bros. as a tax write-off, but the internet rallied for its release and three years later, here it is. Will Forte and John Cena are opposing lawyers in this courtroom comedy with a Looney Tunes twist. Dave Green (“Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows”) directs. (Aug. 28)

M: ‘Minions & Monsters’

This “Minions” prequel takes place in Old Hollywood, where the little yellow dudes are making a monster movie. Sure, why not? Let’s hope the gentleminions show up in force. (July 1)

N: Nate Bergatze

The stand-up comedian, who performs to sold-out arenas but is perhaps best known for his George Washington skits on “SNL,” stars as a father tasked with staying home with his kids while his wife is away on business. Gee, what could go wrong? (May 29)

O: ‘Odyssey’

Half of Hollywood (including Matt Damon, Tom Holland, Robert Pattinson, Mia Goth, Jon Bernthal, Lupita Nyong’o, John Leguizamo, Charlize Theron and, yes, Anne Hathaway) stars in “The Odyssey,” Christopher Nolan’s follow-up to “Oppenheimer,” which is, by just about any measure, the movie event of the summer, if not the year. Riches await, and maybe Oscars too? (July 17)

P: Parody

After an extended hiatus, the “Scary Movie” spoof-a-thons are back with “Scary Movie,” the first “Scary Movie” since 2013’s “Scary Movie 5.” This time the Wayans Brothers are back at the helm and they brought back a cast that includes Anna Faris, Regina Hall, Cheri Oteri and more. Expect gags galore. (June 5)

Q: Qualley

Margaret Qualley is great because she stars in a lot of movies and her last name helps make A-Z lists easier. This summer, Ms. Q is starring in “The Dog Stars,” a sci-fi action film about a post-pandemic apocalypse, which also stars Jacob Elordi and Josh Brolin and is directed by Ridley Scott. (Aug. 28)

R: Rock, The

The Rock returns as Maui to “Moana,” the live-action remake of Disney’s 2016 animated smash, and his locks look absolutely amazing. (July 10)

S: Statham

Jason Statham is a man for all seasons, and in his latest, “Mutiny,” his character is framed for a murder he didn’t commit, and it’s time for him to clear his name. With his fists! “Plane’s” Jean-François Richet directs. (Aug. 21)

T: ‘Tuner’

“The White Lotus’” Leo Woodall stars as a piano tuner who uses his fine ear to help crack safes in this crime thriller that also stars Dustin Hoffman. Daniel Roher (“Navalny,” “The AI Doc”) directs. (May 22)

U: UFOs

Aliens, Spielberg. Spielberg, aliens. We’re in good hands with “Disclosure Day,” the latest from Steven Spielberg, which has to do with alien life and some major conspiracies that may or may not be true. Josh O’Connor, Emily Blunt, Colin Firth, Eve Hewson and Colman Domingo star. (June 12)

Karl Urban, right, portrays Johnny Cage in “Mortal Kombat II,” due in theaters May 8.
Warner Brothers Pictures / TNS

V: Violence

GET OVER HERE! There will be no shortage of blood in this R-rated video game adaptation, the sequel to 2021’s “Mortal Kombat.” (May 8)

W: Weather

You know D-Day, but do you know the story about the weather on D-Day? In “Pressure,” Andrew Scott stars as the guy in charge of forecasting the skies to make sure D-Day could go on as planned; Brendan Fraser, Kerry Condon, Chris Messina and Damian Lewis co-star. (May 29)

X: XCX

Charli XCX has invaded the movies. The pop singer’s tour film spoof “The Moment” was in theaters earlier this year, she provided the soundtrack for February’s “Wuthering Heights,” and she can currently be seen in “Faces of Death.” Coming up, she stars in “Erupcja” (May 1) as a woman who stops by to see an old friend while visiting Warsaw, and she’s part of the ensemble starring in “I Want Your Sex,” the latest from “The Doom Generation’s” Gregg Araki (July 31). Brat Summer is dead, long live Brat Summer.

Y: ‘Young Washington’

Just in time for America’s 250th, William Franklin-Miller stars as George Washington in “Young Washington,” which tells the story of the man before he became our first president. Ben Kingsley and Andy Serkis also star. (July 3)

Z: Zendaya

Zendaya, who also stars in “The Odyssey,” will be back in the latest “Spider-Man” adventure, “Spider-Man: Brand New Day,” the first Spidey entry since 2021’s “Spider-Man: No Way Home.” By all means it should be one of the summer’s top earners, if not the top of the heap. (July 31)

Also!

A few more for your calendar:

Hugh Jackman and Emma Thompson consult “The Sheep Detectives” (May 8); Henry Cavill and Jake Gyllenhaal are “In the Grey” in director Guy Ritchie’s latest (May 15); Nicholas Galitzine is He-Man in “Masters of the Universe” (June 5); director John Carney wants audiences to sing a “Power Ballad” (June 5); RuPaul’s mission is to “Stop! That! Train!” (June 12); Seth Rogen, Olivia Wilde, Penélope Cruz and Edward Norton star in the Sundance hit “The Invite” (June 26); marriage theories are tested in “Gail Daughtry and the Celebrity Sex Pass” (July 10); don’t get pulled over by “Super Troopers 3” (Aug. 7); “I Saw the TV Glow’s” Jane Schoenbrun retuns with “Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma” (Aug. 7); the dog stars are back in “Paw Patrol 3: The Dino Movie” (Aug. 14); Jeff Daniels is Ronald Reagan in “The Brink of War” (Aug. 14); Isla Fisher, Leslie Mann and Anna Faris go on a “Spa Weekend” (Aug. 21); Matthew McConaughey and Kurt Russell star in “The Rivals of Amziah King” (Aug. 21).

MOVIE REVIEW

Macall Polay / 20th Century Studios / TNS

Meryl Streep, left, and Anne Hathaway in "The Devil Wears Prada 2."

'The Devil Wears Prada 2' is all style, no substance

By MOIRA MACDONALD
The Seattle Times (TNS)

Let me just be clear up front here: Certain scenes from the original "The Devil Wears Prada" movie, from 20 years ago, are so ingrained in my brain that I frequently hear Meryl Streep's Miranda Priestly weighing in on things in my head – and maybe you do, too. ("Why is no one read-dy?," in her chilly singsong from the first movie, plays often. I mean, really, why is no one ready?) Unfortunately, she had a few things to say to me about "The Devil Wears Prada 2," most notably, "Why is this movie so fla-at?" Sorry, Miranda; I wish I knew.

"The Devil Wears Prada 2," despite reuniting the entire top-line team from the original (director David Frankel; screenwriter Aline Brosh McKenna; stars Streep, Anne Hathaway, Emily Blunt and Stanley Tucci), lacks the first movie's playful spark; it feels like fan fiction, with everyone gamely going through the motions without finding anything fresh.

Two decades after the original, journalist Andy (Hathaway) gets improbably hired back at Runway magazine, reunited with her old boss/nemesis Miranda and her wry ally Nigel (Tucci); her frenemy Emily (Blunt) now works in high-end retail. Fashion is worn, lavish homes are visited, light revenge is wreaked, mild observations are made about the state of journalism and … honestly, I'm writing this after just seeing this movie last night and I can't remember much else about the plot, except that it wasn't very funny and that I want all of Andy's outfits.

If you haven't seen the original, I think this movie would be downright puzzling; it's full of homages and callbacks, even down to repeating the same pop songs (Madonna's "Vogue," of course) and giving Andy another very boring love interest. (Hot tip, for those new to this universe: When you watch the first one, skip ahead during every scene with Andy's boyfriend. He's completely dispensable, and it makes for a much better movie.)

And you might also be mystified as to why Streep's Miranda looms so large in legend; she's written and played quite differently here, less imperious and mildly clueless. It makes sense that Miranda, now in her 70s, might be a bit out of touch with the current workplace, but it's a lot less fun to watch. (I didn't need to see Miranda hanging up her own coat, or flying coach.) Streep seems curiously remote this time around; she's got a few perfect moments (there's a brief, iconic hair-flip, made less impactful by being repeated later, and a lovely scene in which Miranda walks alone in a deserted Italian shopping plaza), but it's as if the filmmakers forgot that Miranda's power came from her terrifying silence, never saying more than she needed to.

> **'The Devil Wears Prada 2'**
>
> ★★
>
> **MPA rating:** PG-13 (for strong language and some suggestive references)
>
> **Running time:** 1:59
>
> **How to watch:** In theaters

Anyway! We all want to watch this movie to see its stars striding badassedly around in sunglasses and couture, and there's plenty of that, not to mention way more fashion-world cameos than last time around. New cast members have been added: some charming (Helen J. Shen is very funny as Andy's capable assistant), some less so (Kenneth Branagh is mystifying as Miranda's third husband – I'm going to need a whole other movie about how these two got together – and Lucy Liu has nothing to do as a dull rich person).

"The Devil Wears Prada 2" gives us a lot to look at, and Hathaway and Blunt in particular are a pleasure (they have a scene together, late in the film, that's almost worth the ticket price right there), but it's flat Champagne: maybe worth drinking in a pinch, but unsatisfying. "We just can't keep sucking the soul out of everything," Andy says earnestly at one point. Indeed, we can't. That's all.

TV REVIEW

Horror comedy series 'Widow's Bay' feels underbaked

By MOIRA MACDONALD
The Seattle Times (TNS)

> **'Widow's Bay'**
>
> **Rating:** TV-MA
>
> **How to watch:** On Apple TV

Horror comedy is a tricky hybrid to pull off; most efforts tend to veer too far toward one side or the other. Such is the challenge faced by "Widow's Bay," the new 10-episode Apple TV series created by Katie Dippold (whose credits include the 2016 "Ghostbusters" movie and the beloved TV comedy "Parks and Recreation"). It starts out genuinely funny, though to be precise it's more character comedy than laugh-out-loud jokes, but as the episodes meander along, the wit starts to get left behind. That would be fine if the scary stuff was a little scarier, but ultimately "Widow's Bay" feels a little underbaked.

The story takes place in a promising setting: the atmospheric (and fictitious) title island, set 40 miles off the New England coast and popularly believed to be cursed. The island's ambitious mayor, Tom Loftis (Matthew Rhys, of "The Americans"), scoffs at doomsayers and is determined to attract tourists to Widow's Bay, to help the struggling local economy and build a better life for himself and his teenage son Evan (Kingston Rumi Southwick).

In the opening episodes, we meet the small-town folk surrounding Tom: earnest staffer Patricia (Kate O'Flynn), superstitious local Wyck (Stephen Root), sensible sheriff Bechir (Kevin Carroll), gossipy records clerks Rosemary (Dale Dickey) and Dale (Jeff Hiller), and Tom's octogenarian assistant Ruth (K Callan). Many of these people, it turns out, have secrets – including Tom himself, a single dad who has a way of looking desperately haunted on the rare occasions when he's alone.

Tom's efforts to talk up the island are quickly successful – listen for Rhys' enchanting whoop of delight when a New York Times reporter compares Widow's Bay to Martha's Vineyard – and soon the place is teeming with tourists, despite its lack of Wi-Fi. But that doesn't stop strange events from occurring. Mysterious figures appear in the dark fog; ghostly sounds are heard in a historic (and thoroughly creepy) hotel; references are made to a horrific crime on the island a few decades ago whose effects still reverberate; and a pale, tangle-haired female wraith – "the hag," Wyck casually tells us – seems to be haunting Tom. All is not well in Widow's Bay, a place where ghosts, both real and psychological, seem to lurk in every corner.

Robert Clark / Apple TV / TNS

Matthew Rhys stars in Apple TV's "Widow's Bay."

"Widow's Bay" is at its best when it leans into character comedy, particularly in the early episodes. The town hall seems to be a place where time has stood still – everything in Tom's office looks like it's been there since the '70s, particularly the well-thumbed Rolodex – and the people seem like they've been there forever as well, a funny blend of competence and cluelessness. (In the opening episode, Tom yells to his assistant to get a local restaurant on the phone. "What's the number?" is her unfrazzled reply.)

O'Flynn's Patricia, in particular, is a wonderful comic creation; she's got a sad-owl, wide-eyed deadpan, stomping around in her sensible flats and looking at Tom in perpetual disappointment, like she's waiting for him to say something that he's never going to say. Her moods change instantly, like she's consciously switching gears. "This place freaks me out," she says darkly to Tom, outside the haunted hotel where he's about to spend the night, then adds a cheery chirp, "OK, good luck!" As the series progresses, we learn more about Patricia's backstory and she becomes less funny and more poignant – and, eventually, heroic.

But even as it settles decidedly on the horror side of things in the later episodes, "Widow's Bay" feels disjointed – a blur of ghost story, slasher movie, period thriller, "Jaws"-like shriekfest and father-son drama, as Tom and Evan confront their family demons. A few good jumpscares turn up, but nothing truly terrifying (unless Patricia's sad-sack wardrobe counts). But I won't say it's not worth watching – there's pleasure to be had in hanging with this small-town community, where the history center volunteer and the convenience store cashier and the local drug dealer ("I'm a shaman," he insists, rejecting the label) all have known each other for ages. It's cozy horror, and these days there's something appealing about that.

BOOKS

A teen's mysterious death led to Patrick Radden Keefe's 'London Falling'

By ERIK PEDERSEN
The Orange County Register (TNS)

Over a clamor of background noise, author Patrick Radden Keefe's voice somehow sounds clear and calm.

"I'm running around like a crazy person today because the book just came out. So you're finding me at the bottom of the World Trade Center in a coffee shop," he says as we connect on April 7, the publication day of his new work of nonfiction, "London Falling: A Mysterious Death in a Gilded City and a Family's Search for Truth."

A New Yorker staff writer and the award-winning author of the bestsellers "Empire of Pain" and "Say Nothing," Keefe has a packed book tour ahead of him that will have him traveling around the country before heading overseas over the next few months.

Keefe's new book investigates the shocking 2019 death of Zac Brettler, a 19-year-old who plummeted from the fifth-floor balcony of a luxury London apartment building into the River Thames. The police made little headway, but Zac's parents, Rachelle and Matthew, were determined to find out what happened to their son, who had been leading a secret life pretending to be the son of a Russian oligarch. Had he intended to jump, or been forced to?

The couple, who had recorded their interactions with the police, entrusted the material to Keefe, who'd heard about Zac's death by chance and was soon doing his own digging. The book, which began as a 2024 New Yorker piece, sent Keefe exploring everything from the lives of Zac's grandparents, who survived the Holocaust, to the varied experiences of London's ultra-rich.

"I think that they had a certain amount of confidence that I would tell Zac's story and their story in a way that felt thorough and nuanced, and it wouldn't get hijacked by the more sensationalist aspects of this whole saga," said Keefe.

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: How are the Brettlers? I'm sure there are a lot of emotions surrounding the publication of this book.

A: I'm glad you asked. They seem good; they read the book a few months ago. They're very supportive of it. I don't think they have any regrets about having opened up to the extent that they did. They have actually flown to New York; they're going to be here for the launch, Rachelle, Matthew and [Zac's brother] Joe as well. So I've been texting with them all morning.

I think it's a strange feeling for them to see Zac's story told in such a public fashion. But I think they feel all right. We've been talking a lot about just how to be emotionally prepared for the weirdness of, you know, getting on the Tube in London and seeing somebody reading the book about your family.

It's very strange, but if there's one thing that I noticed about this family over the course of the years I've spent talking with them, it's that they're incredibly resilient.

Q: Most people have not had the chance to read the book yet. How do you describe it?

A: One of the biggest surprises happens pretty early on: it's a story about this family who loses a child in mysterious circumstances because he goes off the balcony of this building.

At first, they're confused and trying to understand how he could have died. But then, as they start asking questions, they learn that there were dimensions of his life that they'd had no understanding of. So it becomes a journey of discovery for these parents, both trying to solve the riddle of Zac's death – but also the riddle of his life.

Q: You never met Zac, but you spent years researching his life. What's your impression of him?

A: I think he was a really extraordinary kid. From an early age, he had a sparkly, improvisational personality, a gift for remixing reality in the way that a stand-up comedian would. So he was a big teller of stories and jokes, but somebody who, I think, from quite an early age started to lie, to embroider the truth, long before claiming that he was the son of a Russian oligarch.

I spoke to somebody who had first encountered him when he was 13 years old. And Zac was telling people that his mother had died, which she hadn't.

He came from a very comfortable family. He had parents who loved him, had a lot of opportunities, but was growing up at a time in London when the city was becoming so distorted by extreme wealth that he actually felt as though he didn't have enough and felt a kind of anxiety about that and wanted more. I think that's what helped give rise to this false identity that he took on.

Q: The Brettlers took the unusual approach of documenting their search for their son. Can you discuss why they decided to do that, since for some people, that might seem like the last thing you would think of in those circumstances? But it certainly made a difference afterward.

A: I think they understood that they were going through a traumatic experience, and they might not be thinking clearly. And so when they recorded these conversations, I don't think it was because they thought, 'We're going to use these against these guys in court.' Or, 'Oh, someday a journalist will come along, and we want to have a record of all this for him.'

I think it was more that they thought, 'We are so worked up, we're so desperate to find our son, as we have these really important conversations, we may not be thinking clearly. We want a record that we can go back and study afterwards.' And that was why they did it.

For me, it ended up being this incredible gift from a reporting point of view.

Q: This book, like "Say Nothing," has extensive endnotes, which not everyone includes in their books anymore. Can you talk about that?

A: It's really important for me to include the notes for a couple of reasons. One is that when I sit down to write, I want the experience for you as a reader to be more like reading a novel than reading a history book. I want you to become absorbed in the scenes and with the characters, and I want you to feel a sense of narrative momentum.

I'm not shy about using the tricks of the trade that a novelist might use in a nonfiction book. However, I'm not making any of it up, and that's the one iron rule: Everything has to be reported out. It's important for me that I show my work, almost the way a kid would when they do a math problem. The vast majority of readers will never check the endnotes, but I want those notes to be there for people who are curious: How could you know that? I want you to be able to go to the back of the book and check.

Now more than ever – in a moment in which we have an assault on the press, we have an assault on the idea of objective truth, we have increasingly the prevalence of AI slop, in which people doubt the things that they see, the fundamental cornerstone of truthfulness that my whole profession and the kind of writing I do is built on – it feels more essential and important than ever.

Q: This is also a story about a police investigation, and I wonder if you might just talk about that aspect.

A: They placed a lot of trust in the police, in part because the police said, trust us. And then the police really botched it badly.

And so that's the dispiriting, disquieting aspect of the story. The kind of exciting part of the story, from my perspective, is that in that vacuum, Matthew and Rachelle decide that they're going to investigate themselves, and they actually make more progress getting to the bottom of what happened to Zac than the police ever did.

Q: You've said that you learned about their story while you were on the set of the adaptation of "Say Nothing." I'm curious how often you're approached by people pitching a story they want you to pursue.

A: I get pitched things all the time, in part because I think it's very important to be available to people to hear those things. I get a ton of unsolicited notes, and the vast majority, for one reason or another, are just not a story for me.

Usually, when something is for me, I know pretty quickly. In this case, the guy I'd first heard the story from had said just a few sentences, and I knew this was one for me.

Q: Do you know what will be a good story for you?

A: It's totally case by case. I wish there were rules; if there were rules, I'd probably be better at finding them. I just know it when I see it.

Q: You have built up an audience, and I'm curious how that affects which stories you pursue. This is a more personal and intimate story, and then you expand it out. Did you know you'd do that, or is that just where your reporting took you?

A: It was always important to me that there be larger themes that I was considering: the City of London; the ways in which money can corrupt; the challenges of raising an adolescent today, and even just the notion of identity and becoming and self-reinvention. There had to be a looser bundle of themes that I felt as though I could explore through this story. I wouldn't have written the book if I felt like I was just stretching out the article.

I've done this four times now, where I've written a New Yorker article and then expanded it into a book, and I haven't done it more than that, because a lot of the time, you finish the New Yorker article, and I feel as though that's it. This is all I ever have to say about something.

As I delved into it, I found all these strange echoes and ironies and coincidences, and all of that just felt really rich to me and like good material for something longer.

Q: "Say Nothing" is an incredible book. Have you learned more about that story since the publication of that book?

A: I mean, lots of little, small things; it's a story that I follow. There are still threads all these years later that I want to pull and learn more about.

Q: Would you potentially revisit that story with a follow-up piece?

If there was something really explosive and big, then maybe. But most of the time, once I've done a big book, I like to walk away and move on.

Q: I thought about that with this book. You have such a personal connection with the family; this will likely be a different situation than normal for you, I'd imagine?

A: In this case, the book has just been optioned to be a television series. And it was very important for me that if I was going to do that, the family would be involved. It would happen with their blessing, but also with their active involvement. So we're going to remain involved, working together on that.

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, April 18, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. Hope Rises. David Baldacci. Grand Central
2. The Correspondent. Virginia Evans. Crown
3. Yesteryear. Caro Claire Burke. Knopf
4. Rites of the Starling. Devney Perry. Red Tower
5. The Auction (deluxe ed.). Sadie Kincaid. Mira
6. Starside (deluxe ed.). Alex Aster. Avon
7. The Faith of Beasts. James S.A. Corey. Orbit
8. Judge Stone. Davis/Patterson. Little, Brown
9. The Night We Met (deluxe ed.). Abby Jimenez. Forever
10. Go Gentle. Maria Semple. Putnam

Hardcover nonfiction

1. Through Mom's Eyes. Sheinelle Jones. Putnam
2. Poisoned Ivies. Elise Stefanik. Threshold
3. Famesick. Lena Dunham. Random House
4. Drownproof. Andy Stumpf. St. Martin's
5. Strangers. Belle Burden. Dial
6. The Manbook. Nick Freitas. Broadside
7. I Choose Me. Jennie Garth. Park Row
8. Rewired. Lamarre/Smaje/Levin. Wiley
9. Around the Table. Shea McGee. Harper Horizon
10. London Falling. Patrick Radden Keefe. Doubleday

Trade paperback

1. Theo of Golden. Allen Levi. Atria
2. Game On. Navessa Allen. Slowburn
3. Dungeon Crawler Carl. Matt Dinniman. Ace
4. Remarkably Bright Creatures. Shelby Van Pelt. Ecco
5. Hans. S.J. Tilly. Amara
6. Dear Debbie. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
7. Want to Know a Secret? Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
8. Project Hail Mary (media tie-in). Andy Weir. Ballantine
9. Twisted Pawn. L.J. Shen. Bloom
10. The Tempest. Blade. Danielle L. Jensen. Del Rey

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

Like books? Try these 7 places to hear great conversations with authors

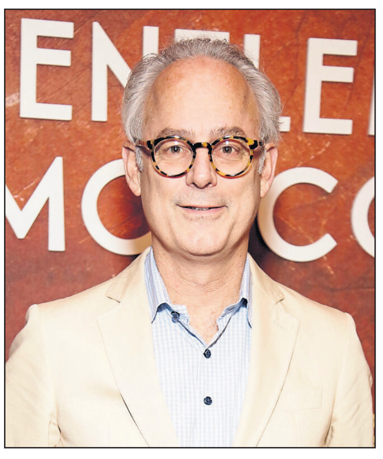
By SAMANTHA DUNN
The Orange County Register (TNS)

There are literally billions and billions of podcasts!

Don't bother fact-checking that statement; it's literally not true. It just sometimes feels that way, what with the plethora of content available on the many podcasting platforms, social media live streams and good ol' YouTube.

The good news for book lovers is that great conversations with your favorite authors have never been more accessible, as are ways to discover new writers (or new-to-you writers). The bad news is that it can be daunting to know where to start. So let me share some go-to shows from my perspective as a book lover, author and journalist (and occasional writing instructor, too). In no particular order:

WRITERS ON WRITING: What began as a college radio show at UC Irvine in the 1990s has evolved into a must-listen to hear advice from esteemed writers, earning the show the label of "your own personal MFA program." Hosts Barbara DeMarco-Barrett and Marrie Stone regularly pull luminaries, including Ann Patchett, Amor Towles and George Saunders.



Santiago Felipe / Getty Images / TNS

Amor Towles attends A Gentleman in Moscow FYC Event in NY on May 18, 2024, in New York City.

Mark Ralston / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

Amy Tan, author of "The Joy Luck Club," arrives to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the film "The Joy Luck Club" at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) in Beverly Hills, California on Aug. 22, 2018.

OTHERPPL WITH BRAD LISTI: Since 2011, Brad, himself an author, has been talking about the creative process, politics, culture and whatever else comes up with fellow literary types. A few names to drop: Jonathan Franzen, Ottessa Moshfegh, Hilton Als, Tom Perrotta, Tim O'Brien, Jonathan Lethem, Lauren Groff, Celeste Ng, Aimee Bender. Smart, often funny, always insightful.

MEMOIR NATION: Originally launched as WriteMinded in 2018, founders Brooke Warner, publisher of SheWrites Press, and author Grant Faulkner have rebranded to offer this as a weekly writing podcast that focuses on memoir and personal narratives, as well as industry trends and conversations with memoirists like Roxane Gay and Anne Lamott.

ALTA JOURNAL CALIFORNIA BOOK CLUB: Technically, this is not a podcast but rather a virtual program produced via Zoom then posted on YouTube. Nonetheless, it's worth your time, as host John Freeman curates in-depth conversations with some of the Golden State's most luminous literati – Amy Tan, Janet Fitch, Percival Everett and many more.

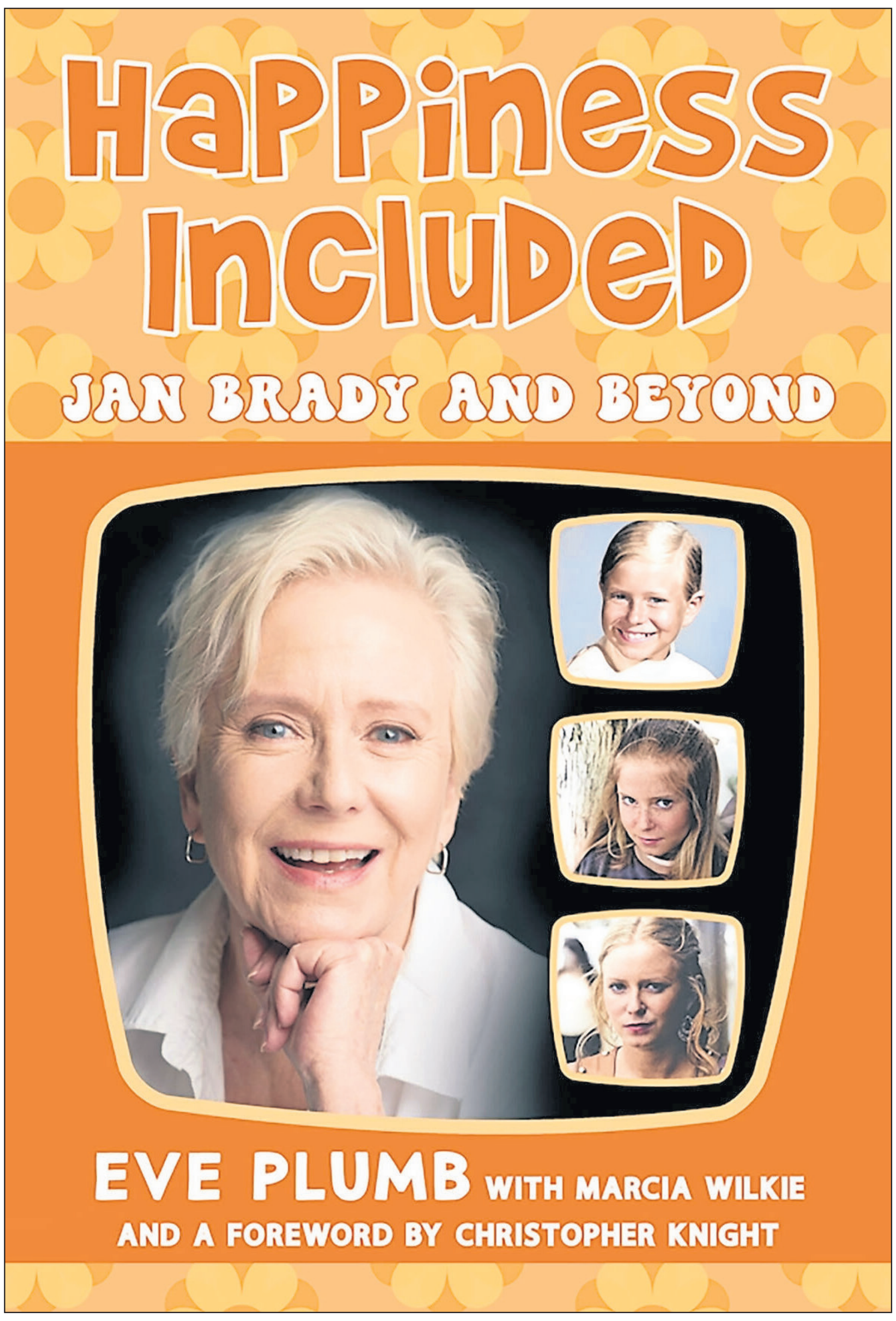
THE UNSPEAKEASY WITH MEGHAN DAUM: Meghan is an author and cultural critic of steel-edged intellectual sharpness whose wide-ranging array of guests – be they authors, academics, journalists – often skew right-of-center. Expect more nuanced conversations about art, culture and politics than any of your average cable shows.

BIBLIOCRACY: Andrew Tonkovich, editor of the literary journals Santa Monica Review and Citric Acid and a retired English professor, is the erudite host of this weekly half-hour program, which features readings and conversations with authors and poets. Hear it Thursdays on the radio at KPFK 90.7-FM, or streaming on most platforms.

BOOKISH: File this under "shameless plug." The Southern California News Group launched Bookish during the pandemic as a way to engage our newspapers' subscribers, but it is now an ongoing community, talking with a broad range of authors about their big ideas. All-star guests have included Susan Orlean, Joyce Carol Oates, Michael Connelly, Karin Slaughter, Lidia Yuknavitch and John Lithgow. We're still a virtual program produced via Zoom, then posted on YouTube – and yes, I'm the host.

'Brady Bunch' star Eve Plumb recalls her life on TV in 'Happiness Included'

By PETER LARSEN
The Orange County Register (TNS)



Kensington Publishing / TNS

Ron Adar / SOPA Images via ZUMA Press / TNS
Eve Plumb attends the premiere of "Book Club: The Next Chapter" at AMC Lincoln Square Theater in New York City on May 8, 2023.

Paramount Television / ZUMA Press / TNS
Eve Plumb, top middle, with the rest of "The Brady Brunch" cast.

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Eve Plumb sat on a sofa in a Hollywood studio bungalow in 1969, a 10-year-old child actress listening quietly as two men decided her fate.

"Well, she looks like our girl," one said to the other, Plumb recalls in the opening pages of her new memoir.

And that was pretty much that.

The two men were Sherwood Schwartz, creator of "The Brady Bunch," and TV director John Rich. They'd talked with her for 10 minutes. But she'd not read a single line of a script for them nor done a chemistry test with any of the five other child actors cast as the Brady kids.

But Plumb looked like Florence Henderson, who'd been cast as Carol Brady, a single mother, bringing up three girls of her own, and that was all it took.

After four years in Hollywood, making TV commercials for Mattel dolls and Glad sandwich bags, and playing guest roles in shows such as "The Virginian," "Lassie," and "Mannix," Plumb had landed her first TV series, and a name, Jan Brady, that excited fans still accidentally call her to this day.

"Well, you just don't know if this is going to be a thing or not," Plumb says of her initial response to the news she'd been cast in "The Brady Bunch." "It's fun for now, but it's all very tenuous.

"It was interesting to be working with so many child actors because I had never done that before except for 'Family Affair,'" she continues in a recent phone call. "I was always the little girl in peril."

Her character died on her episode of "Family Affair." And she was literally the little girl who fell down a well on "The Big Valley."

"So usually, I was the only kid on the set," Plumb says. ["The Brady Bunch"] is shiny and new and fun and different, and you hope it goes."

"Happiness Included: Jan Brady and Beyond" arrives in bookstores on Tuesday, April 28. In it, she writes about "The Brady Bunch," but also about her life before and after the series, which ran for five seasons from 1969 to 1974 and forever after in syndicated reruns.

It is not a Hollywood tell-all filled with tawdry tales of child actors gone wild. For Plumb, the worst trouble she got into was as a teenage getaway driver for two friends who decided to go shoplifting at a mall near Plumb's childhood home in the San Fernando Valley.

In a way, "Happiness Included" is the kind of straightforward memoir you'd expect of a veteran of the family-friendly "The Brady Bunch" series. It feels good, in a way, to know that after six decades in Hollywood, Plumb's hardships amount to little more than a failed first marriage and the career struggles that any actor knows.

"I don't remember if we had the pilot and then got a pickup and went back and shot," Plumb says of the birth of "The Brady Bunch" from her home in New York City, to which she moved after many years in Laguna Beach, and before that Los Angeles. "I would think that with them having built that huge set we must have had an order for some episodes. But it's always a crap shoot.

"It feels great to be there and working," she continues of those early weeks on set. "And having a place to go. That was what was great about growing up as a child who worked."

Here's a story

Plumb, now 67, says she decided to write a memoir after growing tired of other people's requests for her memories.

"People had been asking me for years for stories to write in their book," she says. "And I didn't ever want to do that. So I finally decided, Well, I'll write my own book. Because if I was going to tell stories, it was going to be in my book.

"I didn't want, 'Tell us all your memories about 'The Brady Bunch.' I can write a book and make money, although that remains to be seen, whether or not you're going to make money writing a book."

She worked with co-author Marcia Wilkie, and yes, she's aware of the humor in the fact that her writing partner shares the same first name as Marcia Brady, her occasional nemesis of an older sister.

"Yes, I know," she says of Wilkie's first name. "She's had a hard go of it as well."

She chose to work with a co-writer because she figured she'd never written a book before and wanted to make sure the memoir was successful.

"It was a very pleasant process where she would ask me questions, and I would tell her things," Plumb says. "It was almost a very gentle therapy without any pressure to make any sort of progress. [She laughs]

The process of remembering often led her to her earliest days in Hollywood, making commercials and TV shows starting when she was 6 years old.

"I really wanted to talk about that because it was so much fun and so precious and different," Plumb says. "Not that I didn't want to talk about anything else, but that was the main part for me, and probably the most vulnerable part.

"All of this I find for me is very vulnerable," she says. "Because I don't usually talk about myself or write about myself unless I'm giving interviews on a project.

"But this time, the project's me and that could be difficult. You know, touchy-feely."

White gloves, Mary Janes

Her parents, Neely and Flora Plumb, both had creative backgrounds. Her mother had been a dancer before marrying and starting a family. Her father was a big band saxophonist who segued into record production, often working on movie soundtracks, including "The Sound of Music," "True Grit," and "Taxi Driver."

In her memoir and in conversation, Plumb praises her parents for how they handled her early acting work. Her father kept meticulous ledgers of every dollar she earned. Her mother shepherded her to auditions and jobs with an all-business attitude that only occasionally tipped into overprotectiveness.

"A lot of times with these memories it's about what you were wearing," Plumb says of the triggers that brought back stories as she worked on the book. "I can remember the flannel shirt and overalls as Pony Alice [her role in an episode of the Western TV series "Lancer"].

"It was so fun because I could just be on the Western street and sit down in the dirt if I wanted because Pony Alice didn't care," she says. "The rest of my life was white gloves and anklets and Mary Janes, so that was fun."

Her mother would fret if young Eve got her clothes, costume or day-to-day, dirty. She writes that a tricycle she received as a gift as a child was only allowed to be used inside the house so as not to risk injury.

All of which sometimes made her parents' occasional approval of some of Plumb's more adult-oriented pursuits unexpected. In the 1970 TV movie, "The House on Greenpapple Road," Plumb played a little girl whose mother, played by Janet Leigh, disappears, leaving behind a blood-soaked kitchen for the child to discover.

They also let her audition for "The Exorcist," which is definitely not the kind of movie you'd expect to see Jan Brady appear in. And one of her first big roles post-"Brady Bunch" was the TV movie "Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway," in which she played a teen prostitute.

Sorta siblings and a very bawdy Brady

On the set in those first weeks of making "The Brady Bunch," Plumb and the other children – McCormick, Susan Olsen, Barry Williams, Christopher Knight and Mike Lookinland – learned both their lines and how to read each other.

"It takes a while to check each other out and decide what your little hierarchy is going to be," Plumb says. "And that is always shifting.

"It was all pretty much even keel, because the way that the show was written is that a lot of us worked together all the time, so it wasn't necessarily cordoned off into groups," she says. "We would go to school together, we would go on set together."

As Mike and Carol Brady, Robert Reed and Florence Henderson were good role models for their fictional children, both as characters and professional actors.

"It was just very professional," Plumb says of the faux family dynamic. "There was a great understanding that this is what we do. It was accepted that you come to the set and you know your lines, and this is how we do it.

"We just did the work and tried not to misbehave too much," she says.

Did they misbehave?

"I mean, kids get bored and standing around and waiting for them to do the lighting," Plumb says. "You just start poking each other and laughing and giggling and making stupid jokes. You have to be told, 'All right, all right, straighten up now.'

"But Florence was very good at making lighthearted jokes," she says of Henderson's ability to gently nudge the kids back into line. "As we grew older, she was also great at telling a dirty joke. I wish I could remember them."

Finding herself

After "The Brady Bunch" ended, Plumb continued a busy career as a young actress. A sequel to "Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway," a role as Beth March in a miniseries of "Little Women."

"I'd always wanted to do period pieces," Plumb says of "Little Women," which, as her character died in the miniseries, brought her back as a Southern cousin when it spun off a series. "I finally got to wear hoop skirts, and let me tell you, you haven't lived until you've tried to use a modern-day bathroom stall in hoop skirts."

As a guest star, she appeared on many of the most popular TV series of the late '70s and early '80s: "Wonder Woman," "The Love Boat," "Fantasy Island," "One Day at a Time," and "Murder, She Wrote."

There were frequent reboots and spinoffs of the Brady universe, too: "The Brady Brides," "A Very Brady Christmas," "The Bradys."

"It's never been about picking," Plumb says when asked how she chose projects. "I was fortunate that I kept getting job after job, but it's never been about, 'Oh, geez, which of these manuscripts should I peruse for my next project?' No, you're always scrambling and hoping for the next opportunity."

Plumb married in 1979 at 21 and divorced two years later. She moved into an artists' group house in Echo Park, cut her long blond Jan Brady tresses and took up painting.

Roles grew scarcer over time. Plumb started classes at the Groundlings improv theater in Hollywood, and, discovering a knack for improvisation, advanced quickly to the point that she and four other Groundling friends, including Lisa Kudrow, created an all-female sketch comedy show that made it to the pitch stage with TV mogul Aaron Spelling.

In the '90s, she met Ken Pace, a saxophonist like her father who had a day job in tech. They married in 1995 and have been together ever since, living in Laguna Beach for many years before moving to New York City for both of their careers.

"It was very freeing to not have responsibility," Plumb says of the years between marriages when she worked to discover who she was and wanted to be. "I had been married, and I had had a horse, and now I didn't have responsibility to anyone but myself.

"That was great, and also a little bit boring," she says. "That's why I started painting. But I'm really glad I had that time. I was certainly right to have changed my life in that way.

"I've always been glad that I did because it really taught me resilience."

'Marcia, Marcia –'

One of the more surprising moments in "Happiness Included" comes when Plumb reveals how she feels about perhaps her single-most-recognizable line from "The Brady Bunch."

In the third-season episode "In Her Sister's Shadow," Jan's frustration with constantly being compared to Marcia boils over in the complaint "Marcia, Marcia, Marcia!"

Plumb hates what it's become, popularized by a '90s-era "Saturday Night Live" sketch that felt like "a harsh mocking of me as a child," she writes.

Still, ask her what fans she meets want to ask her about, and, well, you can probably guess.

"Usually they ask, 'What are your favorite episodes?'" Plumb says. [We'd already asked her that and learned that she's only seen each episode once, when it aired live the first time and her parents sat down with her to watch it.] 'Do you still see each other?'

"And they usually say that phrase to me. Like they somehow couldn't help it."

In New York City, she has a room in her apartment that she uses as a painting studio, a pursuit she's followed since a Laguna Beach gallery started to represent her work in the '90s, with other galleries around the country later representing her, too.

"I'm a very tidy painter," she says.

She and her husband Ken also oversee their home goods business, Plumb Goods, which features '70s-inspired designs on coffee mugs, totes and duffels, and other items, and their coffee line, "Happiness Included."

Plumb says she'd love to have another TV series and maybe a jewelry line called Jan's Locket, a callback to an episode of "The Brady Bunch" in the first season when Jan gets a locket from a secret admirer and then thinks someone stole it from her.

And who knows? Maybe there's another Brady project down the line.

"You know what, there always is," she says. "There always is. It's the thing that won't die, and it's endlessly surprising that it waxes and wanes.

"I don't know," Plumb continues. "It just keeps coming up in a new and different way. It just keeps evolving and changing and presenting new opportunities. And that's great.

"I'm just amazed at it and glad that that's happening. Because it continues to bring joy to people. So that's great."

AUTOMOTIVE

EV winners and losers

Tesla and Chevy gain, VW and startups retreat

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

After a turbulent 2025, U.S. electric-vehicle market share stabilized in the first three months of 2026 at 5.8 percent — consistent with Q4 2025, the first quarter without government incentives ended by Congress and President Donald Trump. EV sales swings from the United States to Norway to China have consistently tracked government support, industry analysts say.

Even before the U.S. government pulled the plug on the $7,500 sales subsidy late last year – causing a brief, Q3 run to 10.5 percent market share – EV sales, as The Detroit News reported, had stabilized at about 8 percent of the market. Without the Damocles Sword of 2026 government EV mandates overhead, manufacturers are reassessing the EV market – or leaving it altogether.

Absent the threat of billions in state and federal fines, brands like Volkswagen, Honda, Ram and Ford have dropped planned electrics. Meanwhile, mega-brands and luxury makers like Chevy, Toyota, Hyundai, Audi, BMW and Mercedes have stayed the course on parallel ICE/EV lines.

Perhaps a leading indicator of the electric market's plateau is U.S. EV market leader Tesla, which while still dominating the segment, has canceled its iconic S/X models to focus on robots – whether robotaxi or humanoid.

"EV market share stalled at 8 percent nationally in the fall of 2024 – almost a year before the Trump administration changed federal incentives," said veteran analyst Karl Brauer, whose company, iSeeCars, tracks EV sales data. "Manufacturers were already getting nervous well before Trump was elected."

While China – with the world's largest reserves of battery-related minerals – has pushed EVs, Brauer points out, the United States has the world's largest oil reserves and sales of gas-powered vehicles here benefit from lower consumer prices and superior range. He expects EV market share between 5-8 percent going forward.

Here is a look at the winners and losers in the EV market.

WINNER: Tesla

Despite ditching its top-drawer, low-volume S sedan/X SUV models to open manufacturing space for humanoid robot production, Tesla is in a league of its own. In Q1 2026, its EV market share jumped to 58 percent from 46 percent in 2025, reversing years of decline as other brands charged into the segment.

Though Tesla's volume declined by 4.6 percent, the segment declined 28 percent overall year over year. The EV OG made battery-power cool last decade with face-flattening power – and a proprietary Supercharger network integrated with vehicle software for worry-free travel while competitors struggled with inconsistent, third-party networks.

EV residual sales prices are poor compared to their internal-combustion-engine peers. But as EVs flood the used car market, the majority are Tesla Model Ys and Model 3s – benefiting budget-conscious buyers new to the segment.

"Tesla is a separate animal," said Brauer. "Tesla buyers are generally pretty loyal – if not fanatical – and outside forces don't have as big an effect on them: gas prices, incentives, economic concerns."

In a concession to Tesla's market dominance, other automakers are paying the brand to allow their buyers Supercharger access, putting more money in the Austin-based company's pocket.

LOSER: Auto startups

Tesla's growth from 2008 startup to the maker of the best-selling U.S. luxury vehicle in 2018 (the Model 3, surpassing perennial leader Lexus RX) inspired a wave of rookies not seen for a century.

Startup brands like Fisker, Faraday, Atlis, Mullen, Qiantu, Bollinger and Nikola saw the opportunity in segments as varied as supercars (Faraday, Qiantu) to heavy-duty trucks (Atlis, Bollinger). In addition to retail buyers, startups were buoyed by the promise of ICE bans by 2035 in 17 states including California, the largest U.S. market.

But as consumer demand failed to materialize, subsidies fell away, the 2025 Congress nixed states' authority to set EV mandates, and startups shut their doors or reorganized.

Auto analyst Rebecca Lindland, managing director of automotive and mobility for HarrisX, was global director of communications for Fisker Inc., which filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2024: "We are in a highly competitive, high capital-intensive industry," she said. "You are looking at the absolute minimum of a billion dollars to start and recouping that – and then making a profit – is incredibly difficult."

The Fisker Ocean, designed by charismatic ex-BMW/Aston Martin designer Henrik Fisker, was a looker. "As good as the vehicle was," continued Lindland, "it's servicing the parts, it's building a brand – it required unbelievably deep pockets."

With access to the deep pockets of Jeff Bezos, Volkswagen and Volvo, respectively, fledgling startups Slate, Scout and Polestar are still in the game. As are Rivian and Lucid.

WINNER: Rivian, Lucid

The Silicon Valley-based luxe-makers have burned through billions but are still standing with award-winning, eye-catching, growing model lines. Rivian, the first electric pickup maker to market with the R1T in 2021, just launched its $55K, compact R2 EV SUV aimed at the Model Y.

The $82K Gravity EV – Lucid's second model after the stunning Air sedan – just took home 2026 World Luxury Car of the Year at the New York Auto Show.

Significantly, both brands – with pricey products aimed at deep-pocketed customers – stand to gain from the exit of Tesla's Model S/X.

"Buyers who want those cars don't care about incentives, and they don't care about political atmosphere," said analyst Brauer. "They just want those cars."

Part of the political atmosphere has been a backlash against Tesla founder Elon Musk, who received a bail-out from the Obama administration in 2009, for supporting the Trump administration. The vandalizing of Tesla dealerships and customer cars intimidated buyers, while the brand's hard-core green base rebelled. Tesla bumper stickers reading "I BOUGHT THIS BEFORE ELON WENT CRAZY" litter California.

"There are EV buyers out here who are not buying a Tesla from Elon," said Orange County-based Brauer. "Lucid and Rivian are your obvious alternatives."

WINNER: Legacy mega-brands

Startups failed in part because they encountered big, well-funded legacy brands that have made long-term EV commitments. Analysts said high-volume mega-brands Chevy, Toyota, and Hyundai/Kia can afford to sustain full model EV lineups – in parallel with their ICE lines – to see where government/market trends lead.

Chevrolet solidified itself in 2025 as the second-best selling EV brand after Tesla with the Equinox EV (57,954 units) joining the Model Y (357,528) and Model 3 (192,440) on the EV sales podium according to Motor Intelligence data. With new models introduced in Q1, Hyundai/Kia and Toyota sport full-model EV lineups like Chevy.

"There's a balance with these brands," said Lindland. They are "giving the consumer the choice. And (they are) also insulating their balance sheet, because, they've got to make money and EVs are expensive."

The deep-pocketed Asians' steady approach should pay dividends, Brauer said: "They excel at low prices and good quality. The Toyota C-HR, the Hyundai Kona EV, the Kia EV3 are all still coming."

LOSER: Legacy brands

Deep pockets and market cred have been no guarantee of success, however. Honda sells 40 percent of its global production in the United States and its compact CR-V SUV (403,768 unit sales) is the second-best-selling non-pickup in the U.S. market after the Toyota RAV4, Yet, despite a massive, $5 billion "EV Hub" investment in its Marysville, Ohio, manufacturing operations, it's canceled plans for a compact, 0 Series SUV, sedan EV and Acura RSX SUV.

Even a partnership with Sony to make the Afeela sedan – the Japanese electronic giant's first cars – couldn't save EV production.

"It says a lot when two well-run, well-funded companies like Honda and Sony can't make this happen," said Lindland. "That disintegration is even more symptomatic (of the EV market) than a startup like Fisker."

While Ford has canceled the slow-selling Lightning EV pickup, its Mustang Mach-E appears to be a solid part of the Blue Oval's lineup despite a 60 percent sales dive in Q1 (4,600 units) that dropped it well behind the Mustang muscle car in sales (14,074). But like other performance-brand SUVs (Porsche Macan, Lamborghini Urus), Mach-E opens the door to new Mustang customers.

Dodge's Charger Daytona EV, on the other hand, appears to be a fish out of water with a measly 240 sales in Q1.

"Stellantis brands are so distinctly American when it comes to Dodge, Jeep, Ram and Chrysler," said Lindland. "I think they face some of the biggest hurdles to overcome when you take away things like exhaust note."

Model Y competitor Volkswagen ID.4, once touted by the German brand as the most significant vehicle since the Beetle (which sold over 300,000 units a year in the 1960s), saw Q1 sales plummet 96 percent to just 338 units. VW has pulled both the ID.4 and ID. Buzz microbus out of the U.S. market.

WINNER: Cadillac

GM's luxury brand has embraced the EV Age with an eye on going all-electric. Its full-EV lineup includes the Optiq, Lyriq, Vistiq, Escalade IQ and halo Celestiq. The result is the best-selling premium brand not named Tesla – beating out longtime German rivals Audi, BMW and Mercedes.

Lyriq was the best-selling non-Tesla luxe EV last year at 20,971 units.

"The Lyriq is absolutely gorgeous," said Lindland. "And it's the right size for our market."

LOSER: Cadillac

However, Lindland worries that Cadillac has all its eggs in one basket without a full ICE lineup compared to the Teutonic trio.

"I really like Cadillac's positioning when it comes to EVs," continued Lindland. "(But) I don't think they should go 100 percent EV. Vehicles like the ICE Cadillac Escalade still have a place in our society."

Brauer concurred, commenting that "the fad – that cool kids drive electric cars – is playing itself out." Right on cue, reports have emerged this spring that Cadillac will continue its gas-powered Escalade, XT5 and CT5 models.

WINNER: Chevy Bolt

What's the fastest-selling car in the new year? The remade 2027 Chevrolet Bolt, which took on average just 9.6 days to sell, according to iSeeCars data (the electric Hyundai Ioniq 5 N was the slowest seller at 196 days). Bolt was the only EV among the 20 fastest-selling models, while six EVs languished in the bottom 20.

Like Tesla models, Bolt has a rabid core following, which is why GM brought it back from 2023 retirement. The Chevy EV will only be produced for 18 months at GM's Fairfax Assembly in Kansas City, however, before it makes room for the Chevy Equinox ICE and next-gen Buick Envision SUVs.

Both gas-powered, of course.

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

The Chevy Equinox EV offers 319 miles of range front-wheel drive or 285 all-wheel drive.

AUTO REVIEW

2026 Hyundai Palisade is better than a cursive signature

By MARC D. GRASSO
Boston Herald (TNS)

Hyundai's array of models is endless, but in 2026 the redesign of its Palisade made the upscale SUV something of a flagship for the brand, winning plaudits for luxury, technology and a bold styling.

The Palisade comes in a multitude of trims and hybrid options, and our recent test vehicle, a 2026 Hyundai Palisade Hybrid Calligraphy AWD, was a crowd stand-out.

Powered by a 2.5-liter turbocharged GDI 4-cylinder hybrid engine with AWD, our weeklong tester produced a combined 329 horsepower and 339 pound-feet of torque. The Palisade had plenty of power and had no problem accelerating in traffic or on the highway.

Seven trim options for the Palisade exist in the 2026 fleet, but only four trim level options are available for the hybrid. Ten exterior color options and three interior color options exist on our top-of-the-line Calligraphy trim. Standard features on our Calligraphy trim included first- and second-row relaxation seats, heated and ventilated seats and three-zone climate control. Head-up display ambient lighting and SiriusXM were just a few more to add.

Our Earthy Brass Matte paint was nice for the exterior color, paired with a brown interior for an additional $1,000 total.

Warranties for the Hyundai Palisade include a 10-year/100,000 powertrain and hybrid/electric battery warranty and five-year/unlimited mile 24/7 roadside assistance.

I can't say enough good about the redesigned 2026 Palisade Hybrid. It really has gorgeous modern exterior looks that make it stand out from the competition. With an outstanding interior and a $60K price tag for a loaded up seven-seater SUV, this is a real gem for 2026. Hyundai will surely sell a slew of these and might even outsell the Kia Telluride for those desiring a little more flare.

2026 Hyundai Palisade Hybrid Calligraphy AWD

MSRP: $58,780

MPG: 29 city / 30 highway / 29.4 as tested

As Tested: $61,625

Marc Grasso / Boston Herald / TNS

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

Seenda CTU-30 keyboard mouse combo.
Seenda / TNS

Upgrade your mouse and keyboard

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Seenda's wireless CTU-30 keyboard/mouse combo kit and the MOU200 mouse are game changers for any computer workstation. All are loaded with features, including multi-paring.

The **CTU-301 keyboard and mouse kit** ($45.99) supports 2-device fast switching with auto-adaptation, which is great when you combine it with a feature I can no longer live without: a built-in stand to hold a tablet and a smartphone, keeping all your devices in one place. And to answer a question I also had: You can easily charge both with USB cables while in the stand, or use a MagSafe charger on your smartphone.

It's a full-sized keyboard for Apple, Windows, iOS and Android systems. It includes a numeric keypad and 15 shortcut hotkeys. Bluetooth 5.0 delivers stable, uninterrupted connections, and the ergonomic layout features an angled tilt to prevent wrist discomfort and injuries. The keys are rounded for comfort, and it's promoted to be tested for a durability of 10 million keystrokes. Seenda also touts it as comfortable for blind typing.

Indicator lights on the top right alert you to many features, including a low-battery indicator and caps lock and number lock buttons that are activated. A protective silicone cover is also included with the replaceable battery-powered keyboard.

The 2.4G wireless dual-connection mouse included with the keyboard is Bluetooth 4.0 with quiet left- and right-clicks. It has an anti-fingerprint coating on the outside and three adjustable DPI levels (1,000, 1,600, 2,400). The mouse requires a single AA battery, and the keyboard requires a pair of AAA batteries. They are available in a variety of color combinations.

The **Seenda MOU200 mouse** ($23.99) is a more advanced device in their range of products focused on user productivity. It features an ergonomic design to reduce hand and wrist strain, a 2.4 GHz USB wireless receiver (a small device that plugs into your computer to enable wireless control), and Bluetooth connectivity for both Windows and Mac computers.

ABOVE: Creative Pebble X Plus 2.1 speaker.
Creative / TNS

LEFT: Seenda MOU200 mouse.
Seenda / TNS

What makes the plug-and-play MOU200 mouse stand apart is the ergonomic design, which includes a vertical design, ideal for all-day comfort. Your hand sits on the mouse in a more relaxed position than on a flatter traditional mouse.

A non-slip thumb rest keeps you in position, and it is recommended for people with small and medium hands. A size chart is on the Seenda website. The spherical scroll wheel is as responsive as any I've used, and the DPI is adjustable (1000, 1,600, 2,400).

At the bottom are Bluetooth channel indicators, a channel-switching button, power, and the battery compartment for a single AA battery. The USB receiver is stored in the battery compartment. The MOU200 is available in black or purple.

https://www.seenda.com/collections/keyboards-mice

The **Creative Pebble X Plus 2.1 speaker system** makes your desktop workstation stand out. Despite their small size, these speakers aren't limited to home offices. They produce big sound and are perfect for dorm rooms, bedrooms or smaller living areas.

The USB-powered speakers have 2.75-inch drivers. A separate subwoofer has a 3.5-inch flat-cap driver with dual passive radiators. You can connect them via wired USB or wirelessly with Bluetooth 5.3. There's also a 3.5mm auxiliary port and dual ports for headphones and microphones.

Each speaker measures 5.49 by 5.7 by 5.35 inches and sits flat with the speaker angled 45 degrees. The subwoofer is 6.15 by 6.14 by 6.24 inches. A 3.94-foot cable connects the speakers and a 5.91-foot cable to the subwoofer, so they can all be spaced apart.

Adding a small sound system like this delivers great sound for smaller spaces, and the subwoofer gives it an extra "oomph." The speakers have a matte finish, a spherical design and customizable RGB lighting with up to 16.8 million color combinations.

The creative companion app is available and has six lighting preset programs, or you can customize your own. Other features, including surround smart volume and bass tuning, are controlled by the app. The system has a continuous power output of 15 watts RMS and a peak power of 30 watts when connected to a PC USB-C port.

A multifunction and RGB control button is built on the right speaker. The headset and microphone ports are on the left speaker.

https://us.creative.com/p/speakers/creative-pebble-x-plus ($119.99)

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

Space station is easy to spot if you know when to look up

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

There was a lot of NASA and moon talk surrounding the recent Artemis II launch, and while that mission makes for great TV, there's not much to see if you're just looking up from your backyard.

Did you know that you can see the International Space Station with your naked eye as it orbits overhead?

My wife and I take great joy in running out to the driveway and trying to be the first to spot the space station. Frequently, as we are out watching it fly over, neighbors will see us looking up and ask what we're doing.

When we tell them we are watching the space station and point it out to them, they'll inevitably ask, "How do you know when it'll be flying over?"

Easy. There's an app for that from NASA called "Spot The Station."

Download the free app from the iOS App Store or Google Play store and start it up and set your home location.

You'll then see a page that centers your location on the globe and you'll see the current orbit of the space station. And you'll see a breakdown of the next few opportunities for seeing the ISS from your location.

You'll quickly learn the only time you can actually see the space station is around sunrise or sunset. This is because it needs to be reasonably dark.

The space station itself doesn't emit any light that's visible from the ground. When you spot it, you're seeing the sun's light reflecting, so the sighting opportunities are an hour or two before sunrise or an hour or two after sunset.

Also note, the orbit is a big zigzag, it's not just a perfect circle. Depending on the orbit path, the sightings may be early (think 6 a.m.) for a few days in a row, or it may not be visible at all for a week or more because the ISS is flying over your location when it's too light or too dark to see it.

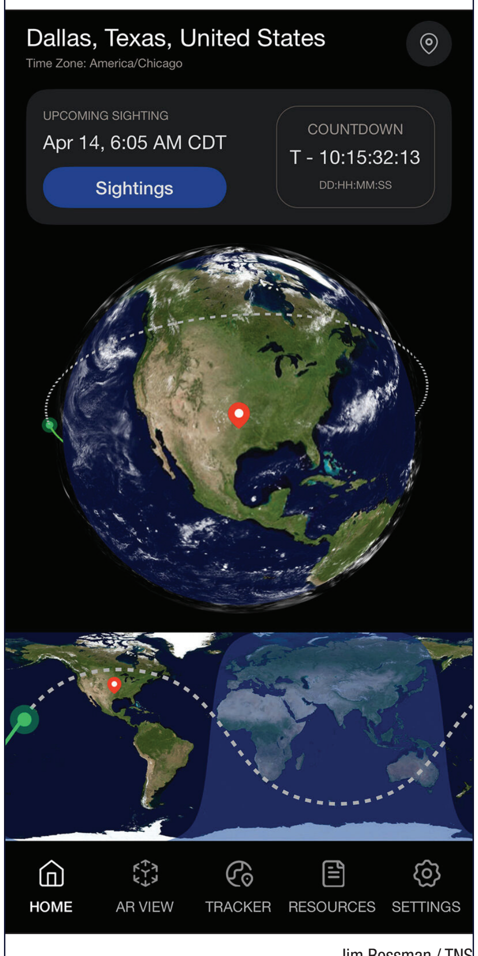
The listings for the viewing opportunities will tell you how long the flyover will last (anywhere from one minute to five minutes), how high up it will be in the sky, expressed in degrees. Zero degrees is the horizon line. 90 degrees is straight overhead. You'll also get compass coordinates for the flight path.

When it's time to see the station, just look up in the direction indicated and watch for a bright object that's moving at a medium fast pace. You might think its an airplane, but the space station light will not blink and it'll look more like a bright star that's moving in an arc.

Sometimes it'll be just over the horizon and other times, straight overhead. You can filter the app to just show you the better viewing opportunities, filtering out lower or shorter or dimmer viewings. It will also take cloud cover into account when recommending viewings for you.

Finally, you can set up notifications, so you can get an alert on your phone when the station is approaching. We set our notification to 10 minutes before flyover to give us enough time to put on our shoes and get outside.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.



Jim Rossman / TNS
Spot The Station app.

SOUND ADVICE

Ease of use, video quality make 4K dashcam a standout

By DON LINDICH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Q. Do you think 4K recording is necessary for a dashcam? I have a 1080P cam that works well, but am thinking of upgrading. I am really impressed with my 4K TV compared to my old 1080P TV. – D.K., Arlington, Virginia

A. Before I discuss cameras, you should know the visual improvements you see in your 4K TV go beyond having more pixels. A 4K TV also reproduces higher dynamic range and a greater range of color, which can make an even bigger difference in perceived quality than the increased resolution. With recent technological advancements and National Road Trip Day coming up on May 22, it is a good time to revisit the subject of dashcams.

A quality 4K dashcam will record better-looking video than a comparable 1080P dashcam, and the increased resolution may make it easier to see details such as license plates or to identify witnesses or other drivers. While I do not think 4K is strictly necessary, you can get a 4K dashcam for what you used to pay for a 1080P model. I just tested one of the hottest-selling 4K dashcams on the market, the Terunsoul D016. It offers the same premium features found in the best dashcams (GPS, night vision, app connection, parking monitor, etc.) but what makes it stand out is the ease of use, the video quality and the included rear camera and memory card. The features can be read about on the Terunsoul website, so I will focus on my hands-on experience with the camera.

The Terunsoul D016 has a sharp and bright rear display, and the buttons on either side of the camera make it easy to navigate the menu. It's slightly bigger than other dashcams I have tested, so it takes up a bit more windshield space. In return you get that bigger screen for reviewing video and changing settings. An envelope with several small booklets numbered in order guide you through the installation and setup process. The documentation is in color and some of the most thorough and well-organized I have ever seen. It seems that instruction manuals are going the way of the dodo, and we are increasingly forced to scan codes to download detailed product information about our new gadgets. It is nice to see someone bucking the trend and doing it right! Once the D016 is set up it just works and fades into the background.

Terunsoul / TNS
The Terunsoul D016 dashcam.

Recorded footage is sharp, clear and very smooth. The rear camera can be mounted inside the rear window rather than outside on the license plate bracket, and it also records in 4K. The cable connection for the rear camera is a USB-C connection which looks exactly like the charging port, so you must take care that you connect the camera and the power supply to the correct inputs on the bottom of the camera. Using the rear camera is optional so if you don't care to route a wire to the back of your car, you do not have to. Some owners may choose to use it occasionally, such as on road trips with extended time on the highway.

You can currently get the D016 for under $100. It lists for $129.99, but the code camera35 at terunsoul.com reduces it $35 to $94.99 with free shipping. Given that the included 128 GB memory card is worth $30 and it includes the rear camera, it makes for a pretty sweet deal. The entire package screams quality and value, and the manufacturer's thoroughness and attention to detail is refreshing. I can see why the D016 has been so successful.

Contact Don Lindich at www.soundadvicenews.com and use the "submit question" link on that site.

HOME&GARDEN

Strategic furniture placement often comes from pre-planning, taking the time to create a floor plan and evaluating where items should be placed in a room.
Dreamstime / TNS

DESIGN RECIPES

Furniture arranging mistakes

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Furniture layout and placement are often a dilemma for many homeowners. Aspects such as where to place a sofa and where a television should be placed are often visual hurdles. Strategic furniture placement often comes from pre-planning, taking the time to create a floor plan and evaluating where items should be placed in a room.

When laying out a room, here are some common furniture arrangement mistakes.

■ Lining furniture along the walls. While the theory may be that this creates an open layout, it often leaves open gaps and furnishings crowded along the walls.

■ Using furniture pieces that are part of large sets. Often a set is simply too much furniture, not to mention it is often overwhelming for every single piece of furniture to match.

■ Obstructing key entrances and exits. Three feet is the general rule of thumb for circulation and for the human body to be able to maneuver. A common mistake is placing furniture too close together, which often crowds a space.

■ Placing furniture in front of a window. People often want to "see a view." Placing furniture in front of a window can often look messy and disjointed.

■ Angling furniture. In general, angling furniture is an outdated look that should only be used in rare cases in which there is a true challenge to fit furniture. This dilemma is often solved by choosing furniture of a proper size and scale.

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ON GARDENING

Supertunia Vista family gets another winner

Norman Winter

Planting season has begun in earnest in the South and, as they say, it will be matriculating your way wherever you live. I visited a garden center this week and it took my breath away with the giant selection. There was the new Supertunia Vista Cool Jazz Petunia too.

With the addition of Cool Jazz, the Vista group has grown to seven and now owns 454 awards. When you think of Supertunia Vista petunias you probably think of Bubblegum, the bright pink variety with the big stature. But did you know all seven varieties have the potential to reach 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide? Everyone has their favorites; son James has been a Vista Fuchsia guy while I have had a special place for Vista Paradise.

Lately, Vista Jazzberry, the 2024 "Petunia of the Year," has climbed into my favorite list along with this year's Vista Cool Jazz. Cool Jazz still looks like light lavender blue to me while others see some pink. Either way, the color of Cool Jazz goes with everything.

This brings up recipes. While you may think of the Supertunia Vista group as the monsters of baskets and containers, they really are the workhorses, so to speak, of mixed container designs too. They work with Superbena verbenas and Luscious lantanas, Rockin salvias and Superbells calibrachoas. If you are thinking this plant has different water requirements than this one, forget it! We have to water containers in the South every day unless we get rain. Thus, all the plants are pals when it comes to water.

While I have basically been talking about Supertunia Vistas as container plants, they are also your go-to plants for large sweeping beds of color or pocket plantings at the entrance or other high-traffic areas around the home.

I live and garden in zone 8 Georgia. I planted Supertunia Vistas in late October, and they dazzled until midsummer when a roving deer herd discovered them. They showed remarkable cold tolerance and have so much potential for fall planting in zones 8 and 9. The key is making beds with a rich organic mix that drains well. Boggy winter soil is not your friend. For this reason, I have become fond of the new raised bed soil planting mixes.

LEFT: Supertunia Vista petunias also attract pollinators like this American Lady on the Vista Bubblegum. **BACKGROUND:** Supertunia Vista Cool Jazz makes its debut this year. It is a cool lavender blue and is seen here with Supertunia Hoopla Vivid Orchid, Proven Winners 'Petunia of the Year.'
Handout / TNS

The Supertunia Vistas do one other thing that is taken for granted: They attract pollinators. You will always see hummingbirds visiting, but I have photographed American Lady butterflies on Bubblegum, Pipevine swallowtails on Silverberry, and Eastern Tiger swallowtails on all. For this reason, The Garden Guy uses practically no pesticides throughout the garden.

Because our growing season is so long in the South, fertilizing is an important practice, even more so on containers with daily watering. In the containers I like to use a water-soluble mix every two to three weeks. I pour it out of the old-fashioned water can with a spout. The flowers in the ground are fertilized with control release granules at planting and then again, a couple of times during the growing season according to the container label. Oh yes, and I usually cut back in August.

The winter seemed long, so you are probably eager like The Garden Guy. You can't buy a better petunia than those in the Supertunia Vista series. They come in Supertunia Vista Bubblegum, Paradise, Fuchsia, Jazzberry, Cool Jazz, Snowdrift and Silverberry, all of which are award winners.

(Norman Winter, horticulturist, garden speaker and author of "Tough-as-Nails Flowers for the South" and "Captivating Combinations: Color and Style in the Garden." Follow him on Facebook @NormanWinter-TheGardenGuy.)

Low on PTO?

Join the Gen Z travelers taking international 'microtrips'

By KAILYN BROWN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

One Friday night last year, Akylah Cox and her boyfriend took a red-eye flight from Pennsylvania to Dublin for a whirlwind adventure. The trip lasted less than 30 hours. They hit up an impressive number of spots: the Guinness Storehouse, the Book of Kells experience at Trinity College, Ha'penny Bridge, Capel Street for thrifting ("I gave myself only 30 minutes to do this, but it had to get done," Cox says) and the Celtic Nights dinner and show.

They were back home on Sunday and went to work the next day.

She shared her experience on TikTok with the caption, "Was this crazy?!" The responses varied.

"I would be tired the rest of the week," one person commented with two woozy-face emojis.

"This inspired me!" another said.

"I'm tryna be this level crazy," commented another.

For Cox, who was working full time in engineering and pursuing an MBA while her boyfriend was completing his medical residency, creating an ultra-compacted itinerary was the only possible way to travel. And she loves the practice. On TikTok, she shares her itineraries for "microtrips" – short, usually international trips lasting 24 to 72 hours.

"You can just leave," says Cox, who lives in Chicago. "You can have that quick break, that quick reset."

She's part of a new wave of travelers, particularly Gen Z, opting for these types of trips over extended vacations, according to an AirBnb trend report. Partly fueled by a viral TikTok trend in which people break down how they spent one to two days in another country, young travelers are no longer waiting for spring break or to accumulate paid time off to cross destinations off their bucket lists. A recent Expedia survey found that 25 percent of Gen Z and millennial travelers said they plan to take a microtrip in 2026, with Toronto; Nassau, Bahamas; and San Juan, Puerto Rico, being the most popular destinations.

"Short trips can fit busy schedules much better than a longer vacation can, which allows more people to explore the world without committing to long absences from work or family," says Airbnb communications lead Ali Killam. "I think people are really embracing this idea that even brief changes of scenery can really recharge you, your mind and spirit."

Another driver of the trend could be the fact that younger generations consider travel a top priority in their lives. In 2023, Gen Z and millennial travelers took an average of five trips per year, compared with Gen Xers and baby boomers who took less than four. Gen Zers and millennials allocate an average of 29 percent of their income for travel, reports the management consulting firm McKinsey & Co. (though a study last year by Savings.com found that a growing number of parents are helping their adult children out financially more than ever). Among younger generations, there's also a mantra of doing things "for the plot" and taking chances because the future feels uncertain.

"Younger millennials and Gen Z are really creating their own version of the American dream, which I think is really based off of experiences and the memories that you're able to create," said N'Dea Irvin-Choy, 30, an L.A.-based content creator who posts about luxury travel, skiing and tennis experiences.

Kareen Hill, 27, of New York, is another microtrip crusader on social media. Since October, he's been taking trips to explore the food scenes of various cities. In January, he went to London for two days and posted a recap video on TikTok that received more than 1.5 million likes. He now tries to take a trip, either international or domestic, about every two weeks.

"I just realized you do have free will," says Hill, who works at an airport. "Like why not?"

Beyond convenience, microtrips can also be more affordable than longer trips – an important factor as oil prices rise and airfares are already beginning to surge. With the help of credit card points and a travel credit, Cox's trip to Dublin was just under $450. She says these quick trips are a "low barrier to entry" to international travel because you only have to plan an itinerary for one or two days. And the more flexible you can be on the timing or destination, the better chance you'll have at finding deals.

Another benefit is how short trips force you to be intentional about how you spend your limited time. "You can get a lot more done than maybe you think you can," she said. During a three-day trip to Japan with her mother and grandparents in May (not including the travel time), they were able to squeeze in a food tour and multiple tourist attractions in Tokyo and Mt. Fuji.

Of course, a common concern about microtrips is how exhausting they can be, especially if you're traveling across time zones. And, yes, the fatigue can be real and travelers should certainly consider their bodies' limits. But the purpose of these trips is to explore a destination rather than relax, Cox says. Once you're in that mindset, you can better embrace the experience. "You really don't have the impact of jet lag because you're purely running on adrenaline," she says.

Want to take a microtrip yourself? Here are some tips:

■ Book the earliest flight possible to your destination and the latest flight back so you can optimize your time, advises Irvin-Choy. Definitely try to opt for nonstop flights.

■ Make it easy to move around your destination. Hill says it's best to avoid checking a bag and to pack light. Cox recommends booking a hotel that allows you to store your bag even if your room isn't ready.

■ Prioritize your "musts." For each of her microtrips, Cox uses the same formula: Pick three must-do activities or sights and plan the rest of your trip around those. One of her favorite things to do in any new city she's visiting is go on a food tour.

■ Prepare to jump back into the grind at home. Irvin-Choy recommends parking your car at or near the airport, which can sometimes be cheaper than opting for a ride share when it's such a short trip. You also might want to wear your work clothes on the plane, so you can head straight into work if necessary.

■ And finally, don't forget to get some rest during your trip – even if it's on the plane. "That's the hardest part when it's so short," Irvin-Choy says. "But make sure you get some sleep at some point during the weekend."

TRAVEL TIPS

Koen van Weel / ANP / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

Tourists and residents enjoy and visit Amsterdam city centre, during the Easter Weekend, on April 4.

‘Eat, Pray, Love’ author Elizabeth Gilbert shares most interesting travel advice

By ERIC BOWMAN
TravelPulse (TNS)

Elizabeth Gilbert invited me to play a game, and I couldn’t wait to get started.

Giving the keynote speech to a crowd of over 1,600 attendees at the ASTA River Cruise Expo in Amsterdam this past March, the author of “Eat, Pray, Love,” didn’t spend her time highlighting bucket list favorites or must-see attractions.

Instead, she talked about anxiety. Specifically, what she calls “Purpose Anxiety”: the crushing weight of feeling like we must maximize every second, monetize our passions, and leave a world-changing legacy. For travelers, this often manifests as a frantic need to “do” a destination correctly.

The cure? A simple, radical shift from purpose to presence. To achieve this, Gilbert shared her favorite tool for navigating the world: The Most Interesting Path Game.

“You go out of your hotel or your ship if you’re staying shipboard, and you look to your left, look straight ahead, you look to your right, and you make – without your phone by the way – you make a conscientious decision in the moment of which path looks the most interesting,” Gilbert told the crowd. “The phone is good to have with you because it’ll get you back home. What you want is to get lost, like, that’s what you really, really want. What you’re doing is you’re asking your curiosity to be engaged with the presence of the moment. So, this is the important thing. Don’t go in the direction you think you should, that you have some sort of voice telling you should go. What you do is you’re just like, what catches your eye?”

Gilbert shared with the crowd that the opposite of anxiety isn’t relaxation – it’s curiosity. She said anxiety and curiosity live on opposite sides of a “toggle switch” in the brain. You cannot be truly anxious while you are genuinely curious.

“Purpose is always focused on an obsession with the future,” Gilbert told the crowd. “Nothing will bring more anxiety to your life than being focused on the future. If you want to suffer, get a future.”

To break that future-focused loop while traveling, Gilbert suggests dropping the “shoulds” – the museums you feel obligated to visit or the landmarks you’re “supposed” to see – and playing a game that forces you into the mystery of the present.

“I was recently in Germany and I and I was playing most interesting path, and I came out of my hotel room, and I was looking…and I saw that somebody had taken a whole bunch of potted plants outside of their house in Cologne – like the pots were red and orange and pink, so it’s a very conservative city, but somebody had decided to take all of these different colored pots, and they had all of these house plants outside. And it caught the corner of my eye. So, I went and looked at it. That’s the entirety of that story,” Gilbert said, as the crowd burst into laughter. “That’s how you play most interesting path. It’s, like, oh, that’s interesting, and you go and look at it. You can live your whole life this way. And you would have an incredible life.”

To illustrate the power of being present in the “weirdness” of travel, Gilbert shared a recent experience at a German spa. Finding herself in a “textile-free” (entirely naked) environment where she didn’t know the language or the rules, she was forced to simply watch and participate.

“I had no idea what was going on,” she laughed. “I was present to this giant, hairy German man rubbing ice on my body for some reason. Not what I expected to happen when I woke up, but I was there.”

This, she argues, is the true value of travel. It bumps us out of “past depression and future anxiety” and leads us into moments that cannot be planned or replicated.

If you feel “Purpose Anxiety” creeping in during your trip, Gilbert recommends this sensory countdown to lower your cortisol and heart rate instantly by identifying four things you can hear, three things you can feel physically, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste.

“Life is not a mystery to be solved,” Gilbert said. “It’s a mystery to be lived.”

So, get out there and live it people!

The Most Interesting Path game is a fun one, and Gilbert was right, Amsterdam is a fantastic city to play it in. I got lost in the city following the conference, and it was a joyful day.

I’ve played this get lost type game in the city before, the last time when I visited with my wife. This time, going solo provided some exciting moments that led to some great pictures, as well as a story or two that’s best told in person.

So, where will you play The Most Interesting Path game next?

What travelers can expect from 2026 hurricane season

By PATRICK CLARKE
TravelPulse (TNS)

AccuWeather is anticipating a near- to below-historical-average Atlantic hurricane season in 2026, based on its latest forecast.

However, travelers are advised to be prepared as the analysis calls for three to five direct U.S. impacts this year.

Potential super El Niño

There is currently a 15 percent chance of a super El Niño forming by the end of the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season (June 1 to November 30), according to experts at AccuWeather. It would be just the third in the past 30 years and impact the outlook for the upcoming Atlantic hurricane season.

“While El Niño may lower the total storm count, it will not shut down the Atlantic hurricane season. El Niño is the main reason we expect near-average to below-average activity, but it is not a free pass for the U.S. coast,” warns AccuWeather Lead Hurricane Expert Alex DaSilva.

“This is the kind of year when people hear ‘fewer storms’ and assume the risk is lower. That would be a dangerous mistake,” added DaSilva. “Very warm waters in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf can still fuel rapid intensification, even with El Niño in the picture.”

AccuWeather is projecting between 11 and 16 named storms, which is on par with last year (14) and the 30-year historical average (14). Officials expect anywhere from four to seven hurricanes, including two to four major hurricanes (Category 3+).

“Preseason and early-season storms are both possible this year due to warm waters across the western portion of the Atlantic basin and the Gulf,” says DaSilva. “If El Niño strengthens heading into the peak of the season, the odds improve that the final months of the season will be less active.”

“An El Niño pattern typically increases disruptive wind shear across the Atlantic basin, making it harder for some storms to organize,” DaSilva concluded.

Potential higher risk areas

Areas with higher-than-historical-average risk of significant tropical impacts in 2026 include the central and eastern Gulf Coast, the Carolinas and parts of the Virginia coastline, according to AccuWeather.

“It’s very important that everybody from South Texas all the way to Maine prepares equally for each and every hurricane season, regardless of the forecast,” added DaSilva. “Even if it’s expected to be a slightly below-average hurricane season, we can still see major hits across the United States.”

Giorgio Viera / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

Screens showing canceled flights at Orlando International Airport, closed to commercial flights ahead of Hurricane Milton’s arrival in Florida on Oct. 9, 2024. Milton regained power on Oct. 8 to become a Category 5 storm with maximum sustained winds of 165 mph as it barrels towards the west-central coast of Florida and is forecast to make landfall late Oct. 9, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Experts are stressing preparedness ahead of the Atlantic hurricane season and one of the ways travelers can protect themselves and their trip investment is by purchasing travel insurance. They can secure a comprehensive policy for just a small percentage of their total trip cost and have peace of mind heading into the summer.

It’s not advised to wait until the last minute to purchase insurance, as many policies won’t kick in if a storm has already been named.